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Preface

The current volume serves as an introduction to a representative sample of Ancient Near Eastern languages and language families attested during the time period of roughly 3200 BCE to the second century CE. This time-frame reflects the time from the beginning of writing (around 3200 BCE) to the end of cuneiform writing in the second century CE. The geographical scope selected reaches from Egypt through the Levant, Anatolia, northern Syria, Mesopotamia, all the way to southern Arabia and thus reflects all major cultures attested in the Ancient Near East during this time period. Although it was impossible to include a description of all languages attested in this wide geographical area throughout more than three millennia due to limitations in space, at least the majority of language families are represented, such as Egyptian, Sumerian, Semitic, Indo-European, Elamite, and Hurrian.

As the reader will notice, this volume differs in various aspects from other existing overviews of Ancient Near Eastern languages. Although it contains chapters that include grammatical descriptions of individual Ancient Near Eastern languages, the focus of this volume is not so much on the detailed representation of the grammatical features of these languages, but rather on their context within Ancient Near Eastern societies and cultures, that is, on their socio-linguistic contexts. The language chapters thus also contain sections on language contact and related phenomena whenever it was possible to include such information – in some cases, as for example concerning Amorite, no sufficient data exist for describing such socio-linguistic features so far. The descriptions of the languages themselves are meant to provide the reader with a general idea of how they looked like and what kind of evidence there is for each of them and should not be taken as a comprehensive overview of the languages' grammar.

In addition to the chapters on individual languages, the volume includes various sections on socio-linguistic phenomena such as the use of various languages as administrative languages in the second and first millennia BCE (Akkadian and Aramaic), a section on language contact between various Ancient Near Eastern languages, such as Sumerian and Akkadian, Egyptian and Northwest Semitic, Hebrew and Aramaic, and a general chapter on multilingualism and diglossia in the Ancient Near East. Another section addresses the creation and use of literary languages and the influence of scribal cultures on each other

that are attested in the broader Ancient Near East, such as the creation of a literary variant of Egyptian and Akkadian, the literary and scribal influence of Sumerian on Anatolia and the Ancient Near Eastern literary influence on the Hebrew Bible. These chapters are meant to give an introduction to the complex interactions that Ancient Near Eastern societies and cultures, and thus their languages, had with each other. Ancient Near Eastern languages did not exist in a vacuum, as overviews of these languages that solely deal with grammatical descriptions often seem to suggest, but they were in constant contact with each other and thus influenced each other. Although research into Ancient Near Eastern language contact, bilingualism, etc. has become popular in recent years, the field is still in its infancy and much is still unknown which languages or language varieties people in these societies actually spoke and how exactly the languages interacted. This volume attempts to bring together the work of scholars in different sub-branches of Ancient Near Eastern studies in order to provide a starting point for further research and research questions.

Lastly, four chapters are devoted to the emergence and development of the major writing systems used in the Ancient Near East and the story of their decipherment, including cuneiform writing, Egyptian hieroglyphic writing, and alphabetic writing.

The chapters of the volume are meant to interconnect, but also to serve as 'stand-alone' chapters, meaning they can be read without reference to other chapters in the volume. This approach has resulted in a few minor repetitions between the language and other chapters, which were necessary for the overall concept of the book and which I hope will not detract from the value of each contribution.

I am very thankful to all the contributors who have so graciously lent their time and expertise to making this volume possible, which, I hope, might be of interest to a broad variety of scholars and readers in general. Thanks should also go to the team at Wiley Blackwell for bringing the book to Production.

Rebecca Hasselbach-Andee
Chicago, December 2019

PART I

WRITING SYSTEMS

CHAPTER ONE

The Decipherment of Ancient Near Eastern Languages

Peter T. Daniels

Introduction

By rights, we should never have had to decipher Egyptian hieroglyphs. For 800 years or more, historians writing in Greek, from Hecataeus and Herodotus to Horapollo, had had the opportunity to learn how the Egyptian language was written – but none of them ever did (Burstein 1996). The last of those writers, Horapollo, at work just when hieroglyphs were finally being abandoned, in the late fifth century CE, who "stud[ied] the esoteric aspects of Egyptian religion and explicat[ed] them in terms of Greek philosophy" (Burstein 1996, 604), being the only ancient source providing any account at all, however fanciful, of Egyptian writing, was responsible for misleading Western scholars for more than a thousand years, in particular the great Renaissance polymath Athanasius Kircher (1602–1680: general introduction, profusely illustrated, Godwin 1979; on a larger scale, Godwin 2009; symposium without a chapter on Kircher as Egyptologist, Findlen 2004; Kircher as Egyptologist, Stolzenberg 2013).[1]

Let us plunge, then, *in medias res*, with not the first, not the only, not the prototypical, but the best-known decipherment, that of Egyptian hieroglyphs.

Egyptian

The English polymath Thomas Young (1773–1829; Robinson 2006) and the French prodigy Jean-François Champollion (1790–1832; Robinson 2012) share the credit for determining that the Egyptian script was not a congeries of esoteric or philosophical symbols, but a writing system like any other. Both held that Coptic, the liturgical language of Egyptian Christians, would reflect the ancient language. The impetus for their decipherment

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was the discovery by Napoleon's occupying army, in 1799 near Rashid (Rosetta), Egypt, of a large chunk of polished basalt bearing an inscription in three scripts – hieroglyphic, demotic, and Greek. In 1802 it and other antiquities were seized by the indomitable naval victors, and the Rosetta Stone, as it has been named, has been displayed in the British Museum nearly ever since (see Figure 1.1). The Greek inscription was easily read, and it was immediately recognized that here lay the key to the mysterious hieroglyphs. Unfortunately, only seven hieroglyphic lines were preserved in full, versus the almost complete demotic and Greek texts.

Decades earlier, the abbé Jean-Jacques Barthélemy (1716–1795), the numismatist to the King of France, had suggested that hieroglyphs "were assembled into ovals or squares to represent perhaps names of Kings and Gods" (*apud* Caylus 1762, 79); the ovals came to be called *cartouches*. This could now be seen to be the case; unfortunately, the preserved



Figure 1.1 Rosetta Stone: an early lithograph.

portions of the hieroglyphic version contain only cartouches corresponding to the name *Ptolemy* in the Greek, so any guesses about the values of signs comprising it could not be confirmed.

Young, therefore, turned to the demotic version and began by identifying a number of stretches of text – *Alexander*, *Alexandria*, *and*, *king*, *Ptolemy*, *Egypt* – with their counterparts in the Greek; he also noted that some of the demotic signs related in shape to correspondingly situated hieroglyphs. But he had no way of determining their pronunciation and indeed continued to believe that the script was primarily semasiographic, and phonographic only when representing names. His findings were published, curiously, in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (Young 1818). The discussion of Young's work by the chauvinistic E. A. Wallis Budge (1929, 198–216) of the British Museum proves more responsible than his earlier discussion of cuneiform decipherment (see n. 3 at the end of this chapter); in both books, his chief purpose seems to be to promote the claims of English over French, German, or Irish scholars.

Champollion was stymied by the lack of anything to compare with the Ptolemy cartouche Then Young sent him a copy of a bilingual inscription carrying the name of *Cleopatra*, from an obelisk that had been brought to England in 1813. There was enough overlap of letters with *Ptolemy* to establish the readings of some of the signs. So far, Champollion had established that Greek names could be written phonetically with hieroglyphs, but whether Egyptian names and words could be written phonetically was still in doubt.

A pharaonic name from an earlier, pre-Greek, period then came into play. In a cartouche Champollion found a hieroglyph that could represent the sun – *rē* in Coptic – followed by an unfamiliar hieroglyph, and two copies of another unidentified hieroglyph: could this represent the familiar *Ramses*? This insight gave him the courage to defy the common wisdom that hieroglyphs could not be phonetic, and to try to read Coptic in the hieroglyphs to which he could assign phonetic values. He published his findings in 1822, and there was little dissent from his achievement.

Champollion died young. It fell to Richard Lepsius (1810–1884) to discover that signs could contain more than one consonant (1837), and to Edward Hincks (1792–1866) to show that they could not contain any vowels (1846a).

Palmyrene and its Relatives

The suggestion about cartouches was not Barthélemy's first contribution to decipherment, and he will be heard from yet again. He was actually the first person ever to decipher a forgotten script, and the script was that of the language of Palmyra, the desert crossroads trading city during Roman imperial times. "Copies" of Palmyrene script had been available in print since 1616 (reproduced in Daniels 1988); but not until a pair of English travelers published accurate copies of paired inscriptions in Greek and Palmyrene (Wood and Dawkins 1753) could the script be deciphered. (Of course, no one had known that the previously published images were not accurate reproductions of the inscriptions.) Accounts by various Church Fathers had mentioned that the Palmyrene language was similar to Syriac. The first word in one of the inscriptions is the name *Septimios*, and literally overnight Barthélemy was able to match the Palmyrene letters with the Greek and to discover that they were recognizably similar to both Hebrew and Syriac (Barthélemy 1759, presented to the Academy on 12 February 1754; Figure 1.2).

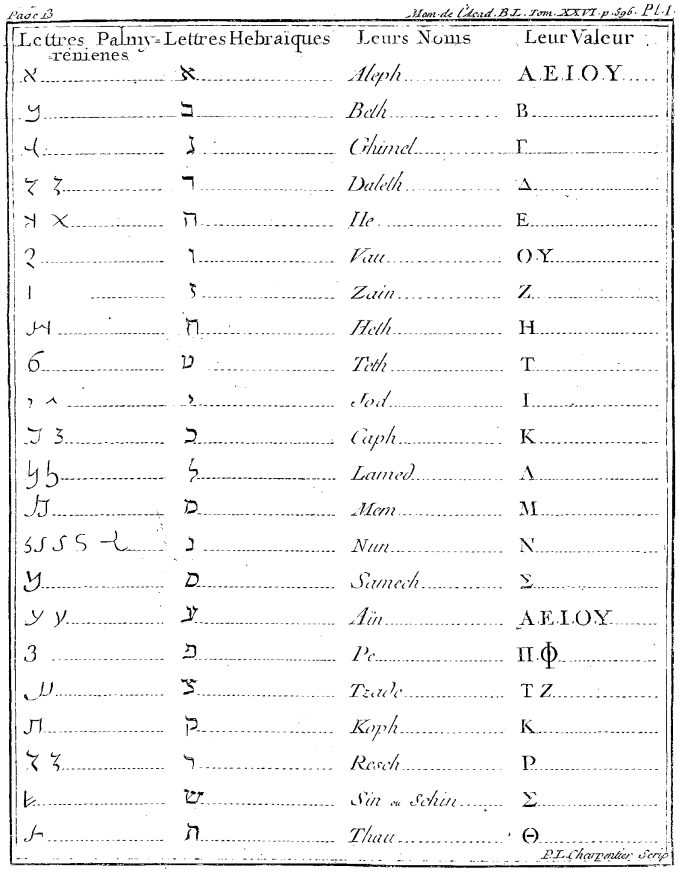


Figure 1.2a The decipherments by Barthélemy and Silvestre de Sacy. Source: Barthélemy 1759: Palmyrene.

A few years later – 12 April 1758 (Barthélemy 1764) – he was less explicit in presenting his decipherment of Phoenician. He had coins from Tyre and Sidon before him, as well as ones dating from Antiochus IV, king of Syria, and apparently assigned readings to letters on the basis of the accompanying Greek epigraphs. His review of the literature, however, shows that numerous attempts at reading the coins had been made, and he devoted considerable effort during a visit to Italy to trying to go to Malta to inspect a Phoenician–Greek bilingual he had heard of. He was unsuccessful, and eventually his friend Caylus arranged for a cast to be sent to him in Paris. He simply states the readings of the letters, one by one, and makes sense of the inscription (agreeing tolerably well with Donner and Röllig 1968–71, *KAI* 45).

Barthélemy was not done. On 13 November 1761 (Barthélemy 1768a), he interpreted the inscription on the Carpentras stela (*KAI* 269), again going letter by letter (Figure 1.2b), but the only indication he gives of how he arrived at their values is that they were similar to the other Phoenician letters that were by now well known. He was more concerned with interpreting the Egyptian relief sculpture that surmounted it. He was convinced that the stela must have come from a part of Egypt where Phoenician was spoken. Could he

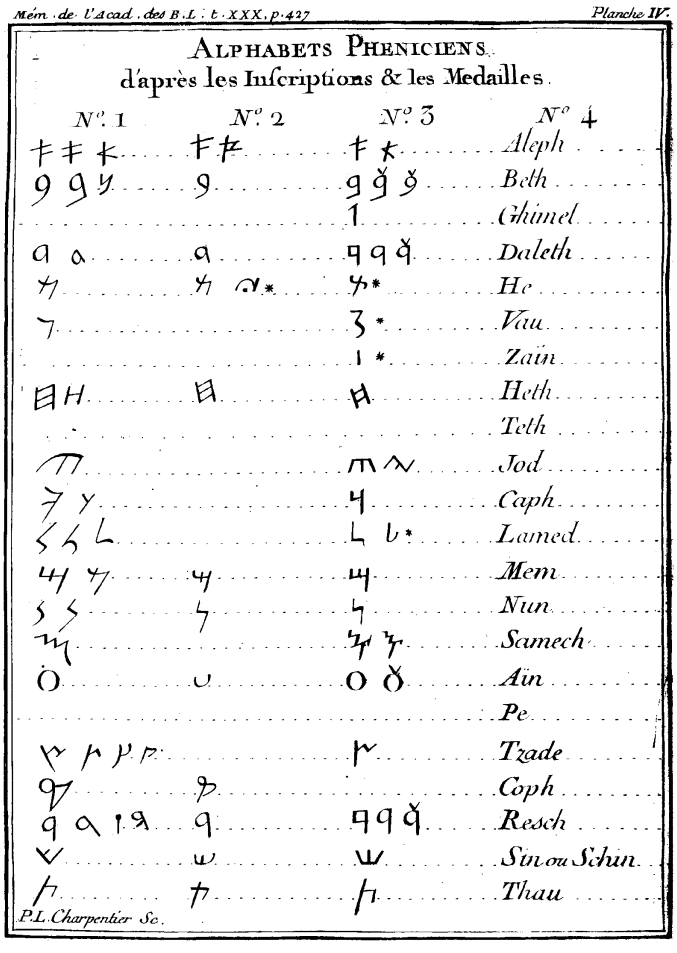


Figure 1.2b The decipherments by Barthélemy and Silvestre de Sacy. Source: Barthélemy 1764: Phoenician.

not have noticed that the language differed somewhat from the Phoenician language? The answer is contained in a memoir read later (12 April 1763) but published earlier in the same volume (Barthélemy 1768b, 221):

> As the monuments have multiplied, we have arrived at a better understanding of the nature of the Phoenician language, and we know that it differed little from Syriac. Both must be regarded as dialects of a widespread language, formerly prevalent throughout the Orient and in Africa, and which, according to national diversity, is called *Phoenician*, *Punic*, *Syriac*, *Chaldaean*, *Palmyrene*, *Hebrew*, *Arabic*, and *Ethiopic*. It varies everywhere, but it has always preserved roughly the same spirit and the same roots.

He includes a list of roots as realized in various languages – and also shows that Coptic, which he conjectured was the continuation of the earlier language of the hieroglyphs, shares a variety of grammatical features with the languages listed above. The name

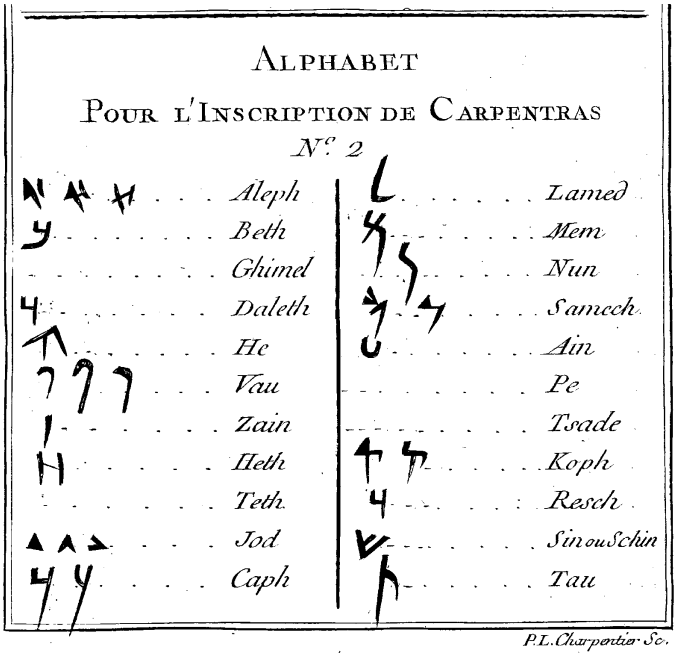


Figure 1.2c The decipherments by Barthélemy and Silvestre de Sacy. Source: Barthélemy 1768a: Aramaic.

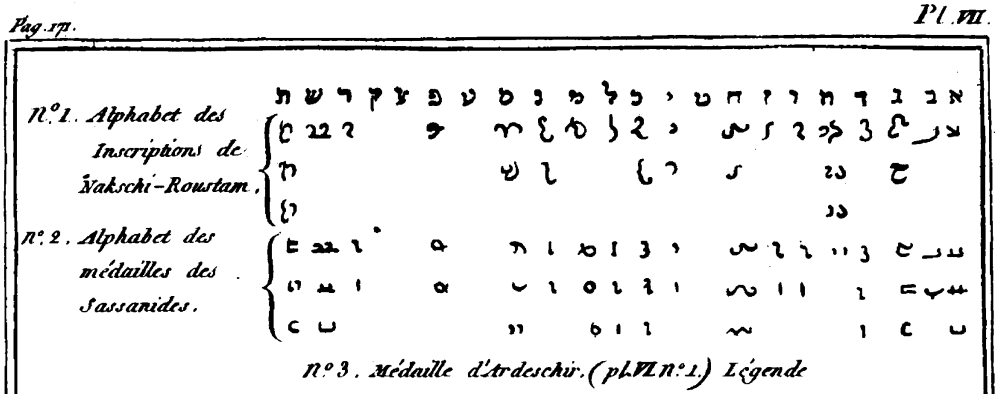


Figure 1.2d The decipherments by Barthélemy and Silvestre de Sacy. Source: Silvestre de Sacy 1787–91: Parthian and Sassanian.

"Semitic" for those languages lay two decades in the future, and the group "Aramaic," which from the list includes Syriac, Chaldaean [Jewish Aramaic], and Palmyrene, as well as the Carpentras stela, seems to have been named only about 1810 though it was recognized somewhat earlier (Daniels 1991).

One more script in the Northwest Semitic Linear tradition might be said to have undergone decipherment, that now known as Nabataean (as the inscriptions were

discovered, they were called "Sinaitic" from the region where hundreds were found). The Nabataeans were an Arab people who controlled the trade routes throughout the northern Arabian desert but wrote in Aramaic, using a script not dissimilar to the contemporary Palmyrene, and the Sinaitic inscriptions were first read in Beer 1840. By then, or ever since, Barthélemy's foundations had established a matrix into which new epigraphic discoveries can usually be fitted with more or less assurance.

Types of Decipherment

These four or five decipherments provide a convenient place to pause for analysis. In popular usage, whenever Egyptologists or Semitic philologists read a hieroglyphic or epigraphic inscription, they are engaged in deciphering. As a technical term, however, *decipherment* refers to determining the relation between some writing not hitherto understood and the language it represents. This table is adapted from the decipherment possibilites devised by I. J. Gelb (1973, 268 = 1975, 96, see Gelb's note p. 95):

Table 1.1 Decipherment Possibilities.

	Writing	
Language	Known	Unknown
Known	O	IA, IB
Unknown	II	III

Source: Adapted from Gelb (1973).

Type O comprises everyday documents in a familiar language in its ordinary script – as well as phenomena like Punic texts written in Greek letters, which do count as deciphering words.

Type IA refers to decipherments like that of Phoenician. The language was readily identifiable – it was always known that certain inscriptions scattered about Europe and North Africa had been left by the Phoenicians – but it was not obvious that the language would be quite similar to Hebrew.

Type IB designates familiar languages in unknown scripts, including such cases as Linear B (archaic Greek first found on Crete) and Maya glyphs. There are no examples of Type IB among ancient Near Eastern decipherments.

Type II includes two situations. The first is cryptanalysis, where the identity of the concealed language may be known, but it is written in some fashion devised to confound the reader not in possession of the key. The other kind of Type II is languages that are pronounceable but unintelligible. The scripts have, if necessary, been deciphered, but the languages need to be *interpreted*. Examples taken up below include Urartian, Hurrian, and Hittite.

Type III, an unknown language in an unknown script, is where most decipherments start out; they move into one of the other types as inspiration or toil provides the impetus. The most impressive example is the decipherment of Mesopotamian cuneiform.

Cuneiform

The first decent copies of trilingual – Old Persian, Elamite, and a Babylonian form of Akkadian – cuneiform inscriptions from the awesome ruins of Persepolis were published by Carsten Niebuhr in 1772–78, who also set out the characters of one of them, which proved to be the Old Persian script. Even earlier, Barthélemy had suggested (*apud* Caylus 1762, 80 ad pl. XXX) that some markings on the vessel known to this day as the Caylus Vase resembled the inscriptions that some hints of were coming from Persepolis.

Antoine Isaac Silvestre de Sacy (1758–1838) applied Barthélemy's technique of comparing names to parallel Greek and Sassanian inscriptions, and consulted the recently introduced Pahlavi, to decipher two Middle Persian scripts and discover the formulary for royal inscriptions (Silvestre de Sacy 1787–91, 71–124). Expecting that inscriptions from Persepolis would include the Persian rulers' names that were known in Greek guise from Herodotus, Georg Friedrich Grotefend (1775–1853) supposed that the names would appear in the style "Xerxes, great king, son of Darius, great king, son of Hystaspes" – who was not a king (Grotefend 1802). There is sufficient repetition of sounds among the names that Grotefend could be fairly sure he was on the right track, and he identified the language as Persian. The Iranists Rasmus Rask (1787–1832), Eugène Burnouf (1801–1852), and Christian Lassen (1800–1876) contributed significantly to the rigor of the description of the language in its Iranian context (Rask 1826, 27–29; Burnouf 1836; Lassen 1836), but according to Hincks (1847b), it was E. F. F. Beer (1838) who synthesized the previous work and formed the basis of his own.

Edward Hincks was already middle-aged when he turned from his main interest, Egyptian, to cuneiform – he expected it would shed light on the hieroglyphic texts. He successively demonstrated that the Old Persian script was (semi-)syllabic rather than strictly consonantal (1846b); that the rather different-looking cuneiform scripts on objects brought from Babylonia and Assyria were in fact equivalent (1846c, thus greatly augmenting the materials available for analysis); that the second and third versions were written with respectively less and more elaborate inventories of the same signary (1847a); that most or all of the signs had more than one phonetic reading, probably because the script had been devised for a non-Semitic language (1849); that most or all of the signs had logographic as well as phonetic readings (ibid.); that Mesopotamian cuneiform, though it probably represented (in the third version) a Semitic language, combined syllabic and logographic but not consonantal elements (1850); and that biblical personages were named in the Assyrian records (1851; full translation, Hincks 1853). Several of Hincks's tables and diagrams are reproduced in Daniels 1994.

The materials available for Hincks to work on were as follows: Pride of place goes to the East India House Inscription, a large, excellently preserved rectangular stone block inscribed on all six sides, probably the first cuneiform document to come to England (see the title of Jones 1801 for details).[2] All the characters found on the block were gathered and arranged by shape by Thomas Fisher (1807), and Hincks used Fisher's numbering system throughout the twenty years he was occupied with cuneiform (Figure 1.3). Second were the trilingual inscriptions from Persepolis and environs (Niebuhr 1772–78). Third, and perhaps immediately the most significant, were the inscriptions from near Lake Van, collected at the price of his life by Fr. Ed. Schulz in the late 1820s and published in Paris long after (Schulz 1840), which used essentially the same script for a recognizably different language.

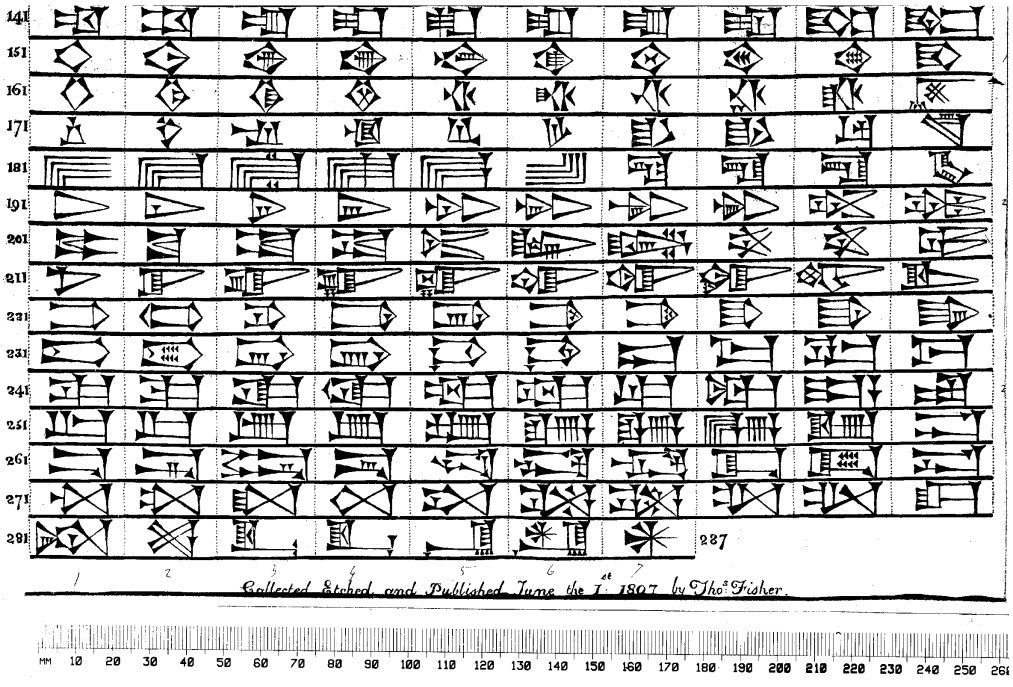


Figure 1.3 The chart of cuneiform signs used by Hincks. Source: Fisher 1807; from a private collection, ex Albrecht Goetze.

The most extensive of Schulz's inscriptions is a royal annal, covering some thirteen years, in which each year's account begins with the same formula. Publishing for the first time in the prestigious *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1848), Hincks noted that the formulaic repetition is not exact: certain signs seemed to be omissible, apparently according to the space available on the surface where the inscription was carved. He took up a suggestion by Grotefend that they were optional vowel signs. Since he already knew some of their values from the Persepolis trilinguals, he could identify the vowel inherent in each preceding CV sign. Grammatical investigation of the Urartian language (which he believed was Indo-European) resulted in a tolerably full signlist, with values from Assyrian and Babylonian as well as Urartian sources. Hincks also brought an end (in 1852) to the decipherment phase of Assyriology, by correctly interpreting the first of thousands of fragments of lists of signs that give their pronunciations – it was a portion of the elementary signlist now known as Syllabary A. He went on to publish grammatical studies of Assyrian, as well as articles on a wide variety of Egyptian and Assyrian topics (Cathcart and Donlon 1983).[3]

Hincks also initiated the study of Sumerian, by identifying a fragment of a bilingual "list"; within a few years, he had made fruitful use of Akkadian–Sumerian "bilinguals" – Sumerian texts (at the time called "Accadian" after a biblical place name) with interlinear or adjacent renditions in Akkadian (at the time called "Assyrian"; Hincks 1857). For years there were doubts whether Sumerian was a "real" language, or a code devised by Assyrian priests to keep their writings secret, but excavations at the site of Tello

yielded thousands of monolingual quotidian documents in Sumerian. The definitive demonstration of the legitimacy of Sumerian is generally credited to Paul Haupt (1878).

Urartian was not so lucky. The corpus is limited and formulaic, with a few Assyrian bilinguals; analysis (e.g. besides Hincks 1848, Sayce 1880b) culminated with Friedrich 1933a. But then along came its big brother, or better its great-uncle, Hurrian (Daniels 2012). The largest cuneiform clay tablet ever discovered, the Mittanni letter, is from Amarna, Egypt, where it formed part of the international diplomatic correspondence of the pharaoh who happened to make his residence there. It is a list of wedding-gifts from Tushratta, king of Mittanni. The introductory formulae are in Akkadian; then comes a mysterious list of items, some with prose descriptions (Winckler 1889, no. 27 [12 plates], handcopies by Ludwig Abel).

Practically overnight, three articles almost filled an entire number of the *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*: Jensen 1890–91, Brünnow 1890, Sayce 1890. These and the other early researchers were puzzled by a syntactic pattern some called "passival." The discovery of hundreds of tablets in aberrant Akkadian at the site of ancient Nuzi in the 1920s, written by scribes with Hurrian names, stimulated investigation of the language that had influenced the Akkadian. Not long after, discovery of Hurrian tablets at Boğazköy (Anatolia) and Ras Shamra (Syria), including bilinguals, aroused the interest of some of the most notable Assyriologists of the 1930s, including Arthur Ungnad, Johannes Friedrich, Leo Oppenheim, and Albrecht Goetze, resulting in the first reliable grammar (Speiser 1941). Even though the concept of "ergative language" had been known in Europe from languages of the Caucasus since 1928, and subsequently from languages throughout the world, the connection with Hurrian was not made until Diakonoff 1971.

What about the cuneiform inscriptions of the Persepolis Second Kind? A century of research on a corpus that did not grow much, beginning with Westergaard 1844a, 1844b and Norris 1852, also Sayce 1874, yielded Reiner 1969. Thousands and thousands of tiny accountancy documents in Elamite were recovered from Persepolis, but their highly limited formulaic nature adds nothing about the language.

The last of the great cuneiform languages also first appeared at Amarna. Among the hundreds of tablets, there were two in a second unknown language. As J. A. Knudtzon prepared his comprehensive edition of the Amarna tablets, he paused to take a closer look at these two, where he immediately noticed the word *esto* in a context where it had to be the equivalent of the same form in Greek and Latin. That and an apparent accusative case in *-n* suggested to him that he was faced with an Indo-European language. The fact that many logograms – both Akkadograms and Sumerograms – appeared in the two texts gave a good idea of the context, and he published his analysis along with extensive contributions setting out an Indo-European analysis by his colleagues at Christiana (Oslo), Sophus Bugge and Alf Torp (Knudtzon 1902).

Knudtzon's translation actually agrees tolerably well with that in the latest discussion (Hawkins 2009; though Hawkins acknowledges the existence of Knudtzon's work, he claims that the first translation was by Albrecht Götze in 1930). Discounting the opening two lines in Akkadian and a lengthy well-wishing mostly using logograms, this is the first passage that requires interpretation of the unknown language (my rendition of Knudtzon's German; italics signal his uncertainties):

[11] *To* you have I *sent* Iršappa, [12] my envoy, *to say:* "Thy daughter [13] *for* my son, *when is she to him* as wife *to be ceded?* [14] Now *may you be granted* oil for the (or: her) head! [15] *To* thee have I a *vessel* of gold sent [16] as gift for thee. (Knudtzon 1902, 54)

[11–12] See, I have sent you Iršappa, my envoy. [12–13] Let us see the daughter whom they will bring to My Majesty for marriage. [14] For her (he will?) pour oil on her head. [15–16] See I have sent you one nice gold *(zu)halaliya*. (Hawkins 2009, 77)

The eminent ancient historian Eduard Meyer wrote of this work:

> Already in 1902 the Norwegians … attempted to prove that the language that we have recognized as that of the Hittites … is Indo-European. This proof, which relied on only a few quite uncertain hints, has generally been rejected; and the Hittite texts that have become known since … appear to have corroborated the judgment of rejection.(Meyer 1915, 7)

A check of the reference shows that Meyer was setting the stage for Bedřich Hrozný's announcement of the decipherment of Hittite as – Indo-European, on the basis of the effectively unlimited corpus that had already been unearthed at Boğazköy. He provides paradigms of noun declension and verb conjugation. He acknowledges the existence of Knudtzon's work but does not deign to cite any of the findings. For him, the insight was provided by the word *wa-a-tar* alongside the familiar Sumerogram for 'bread' (Hrozný 1915, 33).

Processes in Decipherment

The decipherments described so far exemplify a variety of principles and processes. It might seem unnecessary at the present time to stress that the single most important requisite for a decipherment is *accurate copies* of the inscriptions under study. Nowadays, photography is at everyone's fingertips, but during the quarter millennium after 1600, when scientific study of antiquities captured the imagination of Europe, only the artist's eye and hand could record the materials, and their publication involved the additional step of having the drawing reproduced by an engraver or (later) a lithographer. The process was subjective, and wildly divergent renditions of the same inscription could be offered.

That consideration was not even among Barthélemy's list of procedures to be followed, set forth in that first article (1759, 582–83):

1. To decipher the alphabet of a nation whose language is unknown, it is not always a good rule to have recourse to the alphabet of a neighboring nation; and it is much worse to consider the alphabets of several different peoples. … If it were possible to find monuments in an unknown language that represented without a doubt known words in another; if in placing each of these known words under each unknown word which ought to correspond to it, there would result on the two sides the same order and the same value: in a word, if the inscriptions written in an unknown language, combined with inscriptions in a known language, would themselves furnish an alphabet that tended to clarify them, or at least let them be read in a consistent manner, I think that in this case one would have to adopt this alphabet.

2. When a word, a man's name, for example, is found two or three times in the same inscription, it must be with the same letters; and if it appears in several inscriptions, no difference should be found beyond what comes from the difference between hands.
3. In the alphabets of the Oriental languages, one sees letters with different values but written absolutely or almost absolutely the same [referring to ב *b* and כ *k*, ד *d* and ר *r*].
4. Finally the Orientals, when expressing Greek or Latin words in their language, suppress various vowels, and supply them by points that they do not always insert in the manuscripts, and still less often in the monuments.

Unfortunately, not many unknown languages in unknown scripts are accompanied by convenient Greek translations, like Egyptian and Palmyrene – they are not *bilingual* inscriptions. Grotefend showed the way in this circumstance: he found a *virtual bilingual*, by guessing about the probable date of the Persepolis trilingual inscriptions, and by guessing which royal names ought to fit into the formula that he guessed was likely to be found. Three inspired guesses! Let us consider the last few decipherments of ancient Near Eastern scripts to investigate the sorts of virtual bilinguals that ingenuity has exploited.

Himyaritic

The first inscriptions in South Arabian scripts were reported by ships' captains in the 1830s (Wellsted 1834 taking pride of place) – explorers like Niebuhr had heard of such things but were never able to find any. Two rivals competed to decipher them. Wilhelm Gesenius (1786–1842) was the greatest Hebraist of his age – updated editions of his grammar and dictionary remain the standard today – and Emil Rödiger (1801–1874) was his most distinguished pupil and editor of the first posthumous versions of those two works.

Rödiger took advantage of two Islamic manuscripts that recorded alphabets of various peoples; these were often fanciful, but he found two that were tolerably similar to the new inscriptions, both said to represent the writing of South Arabian peoples. The two manuscripts apparently derived from independent traditions (Rödiger 1837; Figure 1.4a). He relied on these, and on his command of Semitic philology, to interpret the inscriptions (1841). Gesenius (1841), on the other hand (Figure 1.4b), put more faith in a newly reported Semitic language from the same area (Fresnel 1838). Both made important contributions to the decipherment, but these are particularly obscure and difficult texts – in fact the first sizable one contained almost nothing but proper names not familiar from other sources and not accompanied by a version in another script (Daniels 1986).

Proto-Sinaitic

In the case of the brief inscriptions from Serabiṭ el-Khadem, Sinai, it was the shapes of the archaic-looking pictograms that hinted at their readings. Gardiner (1916) identified ox-goad/house/eye/ox-goad/cross, considering the Hebrew names of the letters, as *lbʿlt* 'to the lady'; Cowley (1916) compiled a dozen more; and Albright (1966) gathered the results of new discoveries and interpretations.

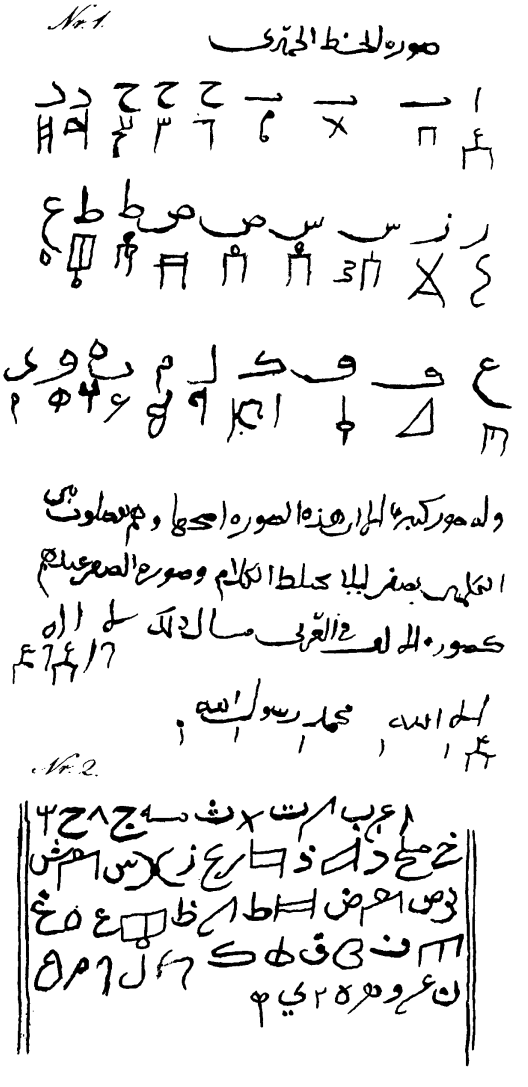


Figure 1.4a The decipherment of Himyaritic (South Arabian). Source: Two Arabic manuscripts (Rödiger 1837).

Luvian

The pioneer in interpreting Luvian hieroglyphs was A. H. Sayce (1880a, 1903–4, 1907) – he intuited that they represented the distinctive product of Hittite civilization – but sufficient materials were never available to him.[4] Among the several contributors to the decipherment, the most explicit as to method was I. J. Gelb (1908–1985). From Sayce, he knew the determinatives, the word divider, and the indicator of logograms. He gathered the words accompanied by the country determinative from inscriptions found at places whose ancient names were known, insisted that the signs were strictly syllabic, and

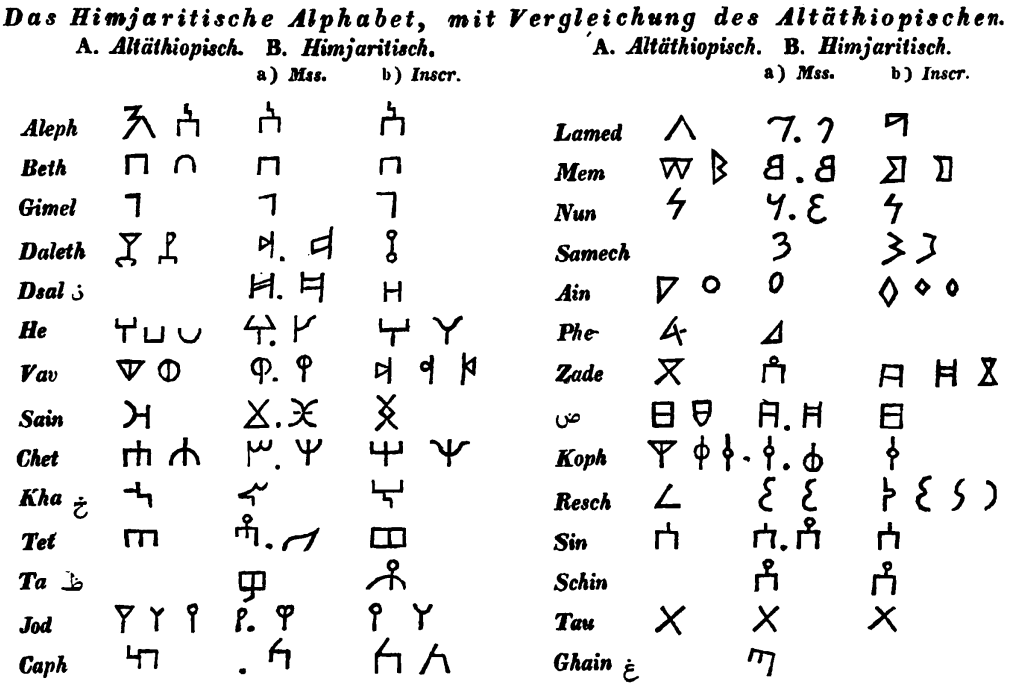


Figure 1.4b The decipherment of Himyaritic (South Arabian). Source: The Himyaritic script (Gesenius 1841).

isolated the vowel signs by finding that they were optional. He made judicious use of personal names and of the few bilinguals, and analyzed the grammar with full knowledge of Hittite. Gelb found that Hittite and Luvian differed and accepted Johannes Friedrich's identification of the hieroglyphic language with cuneiform Luvian. Gelb went astray when – on the basis of the *ogonek* nasal-vowel marker in Polish, as in *ą* and *ę* – he decided that a double-stroke at the bottom of a vowel sign marked a nasal (1931, 1935, 1942, II: 10). Accuracy was attained by Hawkins, Morpurgo-Davies, and Neumann 1974.

Hittite and Luvian are two of the languages of the Anatolian family that are written with Mesopotamian cuneiform. Several additional Anatolian languages were written with adaptations and expansions of the Greek alphabet. Their meager remains were the province of Classical studies, until their nature was clarified with the discovery of Hittite (e.g. Melchert 1994), except for Carian, which always resisted interpretation when the alphabet was taken to be Greek. John Ray, however (1981), studied names that appeared to be written in Carian and in Egyptian in adjacent graffiti in Egypt (where Carian mercenaries were popular), determining often surprising readings of the letters that enabled the language to be read as Anatolian.

Ugaritic

When the first tablets in an unknown cuneiform-on-clay script came to light at a site on the Syrian coast, it probably was less obvious than hindsight suggests that this Ugaritic

script concealed a Semitic language, for the first archeologists' dates for the Ugaritic materials – ca. 1500 BCE – were half a millennium earlier than the earliest known Phoenician and Hebrew inscriptions (Harris 1939), and the archeological context pointed to the west. The dating has since been adjusted to ca. 1200 BCE, so that they are nearly contemporary with the composition of the earliest biblical passages – to which their literary texts are strikingly similar (though they predate the earliest Hebrew inscriptions).

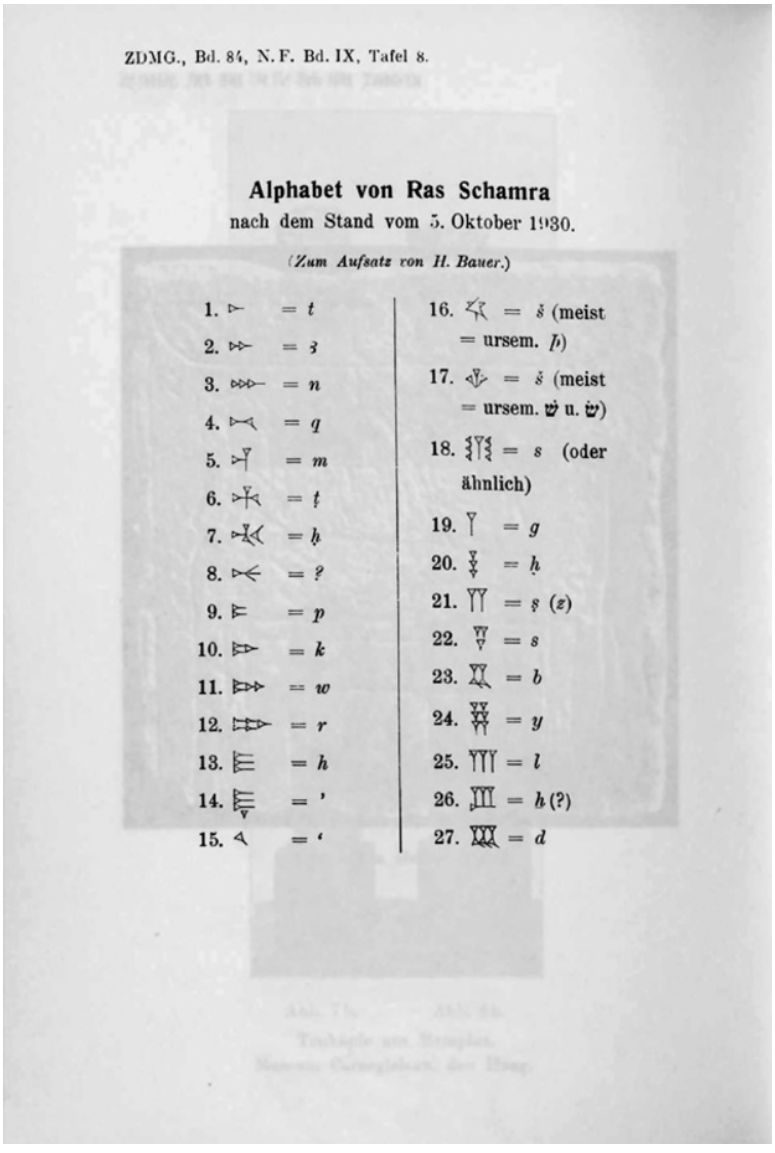
The epigrapher called to the excavations, Charles Virolleaud (1879–1968), was an experienced Assyriologist who with laudable speed published the tablets as they were unearthed. The three scholars who addressed Ugaritic chose different virtual bilinguals. Virolleaud noted that an inscription on certain adzes was also found at the beginning of a clay tablet, with one additional sign preceding it; he suggested that the tablet was a message to the owner of the adzes, and the extra sign was the prefix *l-* 'to' in Semitic. On a seeming accounts tablet he then found a word of the pattern (rare in Semitic) *?l?*; this had to be 'three' (Hebrew *šlš*). Hans Bauer (1878–1937) isolated the letters that seemed to be prefixes and suffixes and assigned them to the limited number of sounds that are used as such in Semitic (*l*, *m*, *n*, *t*). Édouard Dhorme (1881–1966) worked along similar lines, and there was exemplary cooperation among the three. They had soon identified at least 20 of the 30 letters (choosing a representative article by each, Bauer 1930 [Figure 1.5a], Dhorme 1930 [Figure 1.5b], Virolleaud 1931a [Figure 1.5c], cf. Albright 1932 [Figure 1.5d]; for details: Corré 1966, Day 2002).

The most unusual feature of Ugaritic is that although each consonant is represented by one letter, ʾ is represented by a different letter before each of the three vowels. Bauer, confronted by irrefutable evidence that two different letters had to stand for ʾ, even though this was unparalleled in Semitic, declared that indeed they did – and Virolleaud soon added a third. Bauer tried to differentiate the three alephs according to the following vowel, but within the framework of his account of Hebrew vocalization involving different stages of the language, he could not get the Ugaritic vowels to come out right. It was Johannes Friedrich (1933b) who explained them correctly. Bauer did not dispute the solution but did not publish the second volume of his monumental Hebrew grammar, Bauer and Leander 1918–22, perhaps because he would have had to reconceptualize so much of the undocumented history of the language. It was another two decades before all the remaining Ugaritic letters were securely read (Daniels in press).

Summary

The Near Eastern decipherments exemplify the requisites for any decipherment:

- obtain accurate *copies*
- compile a *catalog* of the characters and variants
- from their *number*, suggest type of script: letters, syllables, morphemes
- observe *distributional analysis*: word boundaries, prefixes, suffixes, inflections
- identify *proper names*
- if not *bilingual*, identify a *virtual bilingual*



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Alphabet von Ras Schamra

nach dem Stand vom 5. Oktober 1930.

(Zum Aufsatz von H. Bauer.)

1. = *t*
2. = *ʒ*
3. = *n*
4. = *q*
5. = *m*
6. = *ṯ*
7. = *ḫ*
8. = *ʔ*
9. = *p*
10. = *k*
11. = *w*
12. = *r*
13. = *h*
14. = *ʾ*
15. = *ʿ*
16. = *ś* (meist = ursem. *ṯ*)
17. = *š* (meist = ursem. שׂ u. שׁ)
18. = *s* (oder ähnlich)
19. = *g*
20. = *ḥ*
21. = *ṣ* (*ẓ*)
22. = *s*
23. = *ḍ*
24. = *y*
25. = *l*
26. = *ḥ* (?)
27. = *d*

Figure 1.5a The earliest Ugaritic charts. Assyriologists organized the letters by shape, Semitists by Hebrew alphabetical order. Source: Bauer 1930.

Accounts of Decipherment

Several books on decipherment can be recommended – in increasing detail, Friedrich 1957, Gordon 1982, and Pope 1999 – though none is ideal; their accounts of the decipherment of Mesopotamian cuneiform are inaccurate. Gordon's is a personal account; the 1982 edition largely replaces the discussion of his eastern Mediterranean work with a

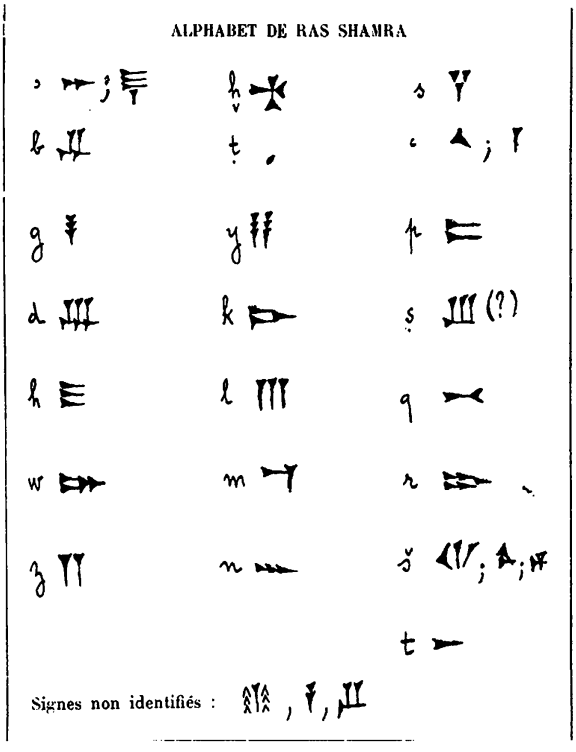


Figure 1.5b The earliest Ugaritic charts. Assyriologists organized the letters by shape, Semitists by Hebrew alphabetical order. Source: Dhorme 1930.

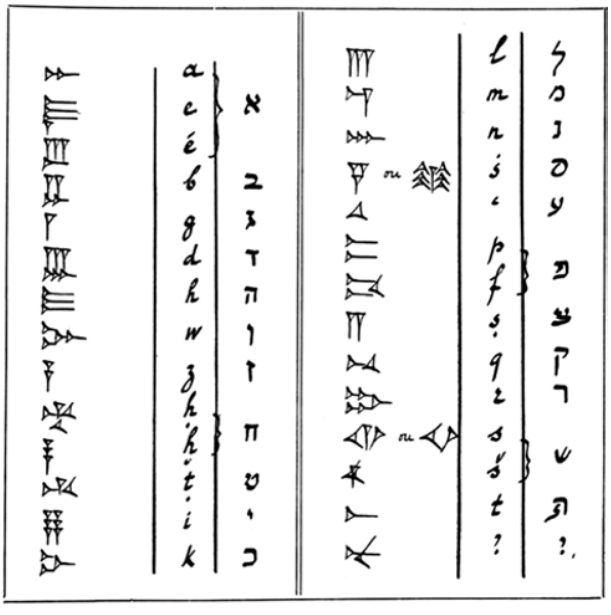


Figure 1.5c The earliest Ugaritic charts. Assyriologists organized the letters by shape, Semitists by Hebrew alphabetical order. Source: Virolleaud, Charles. 1931. "Un poème phénicien de Ras-Shamra." Syria 12: 193–224.

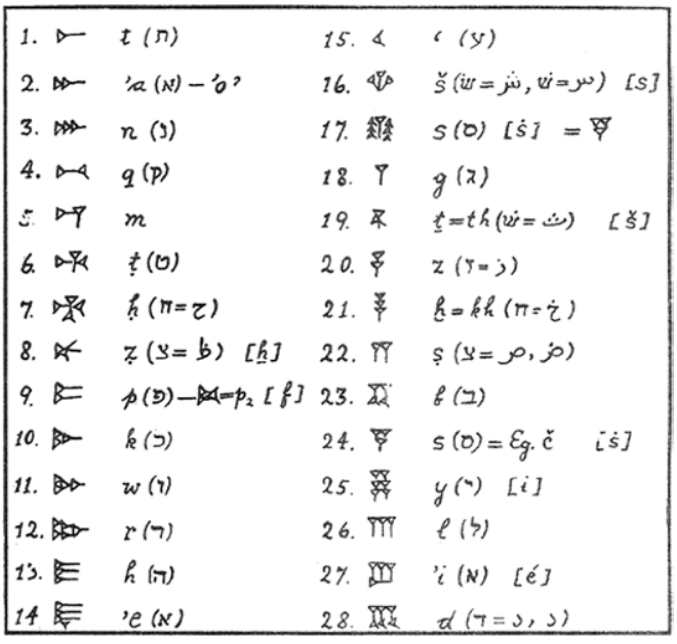


Figure 1.5d The earliest Ugaritic charts. Assyriologists organized the letters by shape, Semitists by Hebrew alphabetical order. Source: Albright 1932.

discussion of (the interpretation of) Eblaite, not addressed above. Pope's is well illustrated and includes a number of references to primary sources. Deuel 1965 is a popular, reliable, narrative of the recovery of (primarily) manuscripts. Robinson 2002 calls attention to scripts that have not yet been read.

NOTES

1 A claim that received some attention in the United Kingdom that medieval Arab scholars could read or had made progress in deciphering Egyptian hieroglyphs (El Daly 2005) and in turn influenced Kircher was based on overinterpretation of certain passages in some of the Arabic writings (Daniels 2016).

2 Dorian Leveque of the British Library confirmed (pers.comm., 14 Sept. 2016) that the publication of this text in 1R 53–64 (i.e., Rawlinson & Norris, 1861, pls. 53–64) presents the same image that had been created by Jones decades earlier.

3 A name frequently encountered in accounts of the decipherment of cuneiform is that of Henry Creswicke Rawlinson. He was a British army officer stationed in the East who availed himself of the opportunity to investigate antiquities, including inscriptions. His great accomplishment was to make an accurate copy of the great trilingual inscription that Darius I had had carved into a cliff face at Behistun, Iran, which had long defied attempts to access it. It is by far the longest text from the Persian Empire, and invaluable for teasing out its history, but neither it nor Rawlinson played any part

in the decipherment of cuneiform. The Persian version was not published until Rawlinson 1846 (and he had had the benefit of Lassen's publications in his study of it) and the weather-damaged Babylonian only in Rawlinson 1851, and he had been kept abreast of Hincks's progress by various correspondents (Daniels 2008). He was one of four scholars invited to prepare independent translations of an unpublished inscription; the prestigious judges' verdict was that, of the four, it was Hincks's and Rawlinson's that agreed the most (Comparative Translations 1857).

Hincks's contributions were appreciated and not devalued during his lifetime and for some time afterward (e.g. Rogers 1911, 631–32). But Rawlinson was championed by his brother, a noted historian, whose biography (G. Rawlinson 1898) cannot provide any information on how H. C. accomplished what he was said to have done; and by Budge 1925, which in its silence assured Hincks's future obscurity.

4 *The Man Who Didn't Decipher Anything* would be a fitting title for a biography of Archibald Henry Sayce (1845–1933). As we have hinted, he took an interest in everything touching on the biblical world, and he knew everyone (Sayce 1923). A rare intemperate article by Edward Hincks (1864) answering Sayce's comment (1864) on Hincks 1863 might have been worded differently had he realized he was addressing an 18-year-old schoolboy.

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CHAPTER TWO

The Emergence of Cuneiform Writing

Christopher Woods

Introduction

During the second half of the fourth millennium (3400–3200 BCE), Mesopotamians invented a revolutionary accounting system that would eventually evolve into a means of flexibly representing spoken language. The trajectory from mnemonic bookkeeping device to full-fledged graphic representation of speech, through a combination of logographic and syllabographic signs, defines the invention and development of writing in Mesopotamia. Taking its place alongside the Chinese (c. 1200 BCE) and Mesoamerican (c. 600 BCE)[1] inventions, and quite possibly the contemporaneous Egyptian invention (c. 3200 BCE), cuneiform is one of the four, presently accepted "pristine" or primary writing systems – instances in human history when writing was invented *ex nihilo* with no previous exposure to, or knowledge of, writing. Cuneiform not only boasts what might very well be the world's oldest writing system but also stakes claim to the largest corpus of incipient writing and some of the clearest evidence for the cultural and social context out of which writing sprang. As such, cuneiform plays a pivotal role in the story of how humans first made language visible and in the study of writing systems broadly.

Inscribed primarily on wet clay, the descriptive designation cuneiform (from Latin *cuneus* 'wedge' and *forma* 'form') refers to the distinctive wedge-like appearance of the signs, or graphs, which were fashioned with a reed stylus. During the long history of cuneiform, other media were also employed, including wax, metal, and particularly stone for the recording of monumental inscriptions. The sign shapes on these media were executed in mimicry of those on clay and so preserved the distinctive wedge appearance. Native designations, which include Sumerian gu-šum$_2$ (= Akkadian *miḫiṣtu/miḫiltu*) "stroke, wedge" and saŋtak (= Akkadian *santakku*) "triangle, wedge" similarly reflect this

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visual quality. Although the cuneiform script was, in all likelihood, first used to express the Sumerian language, it was subsequently adapted to write a wide variety of unrelated languages throughout the ancient Near East. These include Akkadian, Eblaite (which is considered by many Assyriologists to be a dialect or subbranch of Akkadian), Elamite, Hittite, Hurrian, and Urartian. Cuneiform texts were written as late as the first century CE, more than three thousand years after the script's invention. A consequence of using durable clay as the principle medium of writing, rather than perishable material such as papyrus, is that Mesopotamia is one of the best documented civilizations prior to the industrial revolution.

The Context of Proto-Cuneiform, Its Precursors and Origins

The earliest known cuneiform texts were discovered in the temple precinct Eana in the city-state of Uruk in southern Babylonia. This fact, coupled with the preeminence of Uruk during the late fourth millennium, as well as the particular unmarked writing of the city itself among southern Mesopotamian toponyms, may point to Uruk as the birthplace of writing in Mesopotamia. The invention of writing was tightly intertwined with the rapid development of Mesopotamian civilization, as evidenced by extraordinary changes that took place in the city-state towards the end of the fourth millennium. Uruk, at the end of the era to which it gave its name – the Late Uruk period (c. 3350-3100 BCE), corresponding to the Uruk IV and slightly later Uruk III archaeological strata – was characterized by rapid urbanization, population growth, and building on a monumental scale. Dramatic increases in social, political, and economic complexity accompanied these developments. Consequently, there was administrative pressure to maintain records of production, goods, and labor. Mesopotamian writing was invented in this context – as a means of addressing the bookkeeping requirements of an increasingly complex bureaucracy.

The Uruk IV-III texts, which are written in a script known as proto-cuneiform, are primarily concerned with the distribution of grain, the processing of fruits, cereals and raw materials, domesticated animals and animal products, fisheries, and the management of land and labor (Englund 1998, 128). It is important to stress in this connection that genres closely associated with writing in the modern world and, indeed, with later Mesopotamian culture – literature, religious texts, historical documents, law codes, and letters – played no role in the origins of writing. Rather, these genres arose quite late, in the second half of the third millennium BCE, some 700 or more years after the invention of writing, once the writing system evolved into a more accurate reflection of spoken language. The existence of practise administrative texts and elementary scribal exercises demonstrating sign formation provide evidence for the transmission of the new technology from one generation to the next. Indeed, nearly 20 % of the Uruk III corpus (but notably less than 1% of the Uruk IV texts [Englund 2011, 35]) is not administrative in nature, but rather represents the artifacts of scribal education and the standardization of the incipient written tradition. Referred to as lexical lists, these texts constituted the native lexicographical tradition. Lexical lists would become the primary paradigm for the scholarly organization

of information, and one of the most distinctive signatures of Mesopotamian intellectual life, a symbol of scribal identity.

Consistent with the accounting context of proto-cuneiform is the primacy of numeracy in the Mesopotamian invention (Figure 2.1). Despite the commonplace definition of writing as the unambiguous graphic notation of speech, the bond between writing and spoken language was minimal. It is not in the recording of speech – of words – that the sophistication of the new invention is most clearly on display, but rather in the recording of numerical and metrological information and the complexity of the numerical thinking that underlies these representations. Writing was developed to qualify numerical notations, resulting in increased flexibility and capacity for information beyond what could be achieved with numerical and metrological systems alone, and beyond what was possible with earlier, primitive administrative devices. In short, writing in Mesopotamia was born of numeracy, a conclusion that finds support in the immediate precursors to writing, which include tablets consisting exclusively of numerical notations (so-called numerical tablets) and clay envelopes containing a variety of counters – geometric shapes that likely correspond to numerical and metrological systems of the proto-literate period. Indeed, the invention of writing brings to light for us the mathematical heights that had been achieved by the close of the pre-literate era, revealing complex metrological systems, well-established



Figure 2.1 This text (OIM A2515; 5.9 × 3.4 × 1.6 cm) from the Uruk III period (c. 3100 BCE) describes the amount of barley, approximately 25 ≈ 6 = 150 ▰ (‘bushels’), needed for a field of 10 bur_3 (1 bur_3 = 6.5 hectares = c. 16 acres). Source: From Woods 2010, 79 (with previous bibliography; modified after original provided by Robert K. Englund).

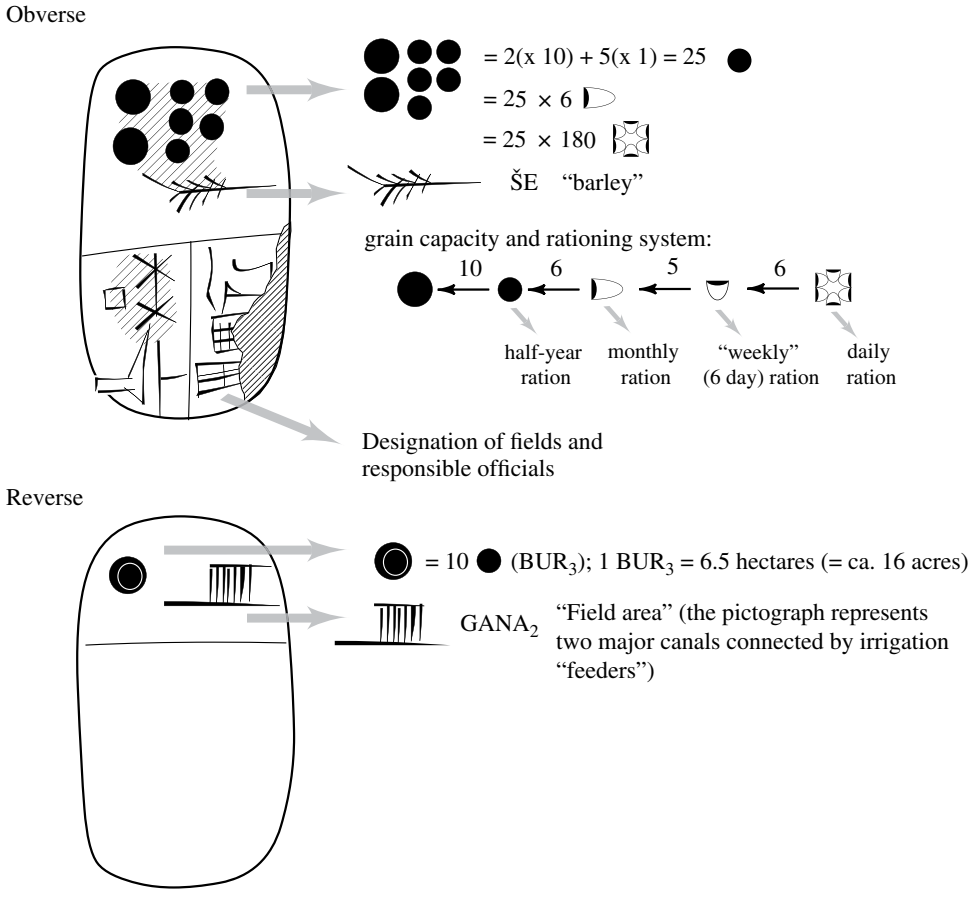


Figure 2.1 (Continued)

procedures of arithmetic that include, in its most advanced forms, algorithms for geometric approximations and multiple levels of subtotaling across variables, and a facility for handling computations involving large numbers.

In Mesopotamia the invention of writing represented a more comprehensive solution to a number of administrative and bookkeeping problems posed by an increasingly complex bureaucracy, problems which were addressed individually, but only in part, by earlier devices (Nissen 1986, 323–326). These earlier, prehistoric administrative devices, which were likewise products of the Late Uruk period, include cylinder seals, solid clay bullae, numerical tablets, the aforementioned clay counters – typically referred to as tokens – and clay envelopes (Figure 2.2). Each served as a way to control and monitor the flow of materials, commodities, and labor. Although writing more often complemented rather than replaced these devices, it provided a vastly more robust, effective, and flexible means of recording and organizing data.

Whereas the origins of the numerical graphs of cuneiform can be convincingly shown to have evolved from tokens, through the intermediary of their impressions on clay, the vast majority of the word signs were likely invented with the writing system itself. In a minority

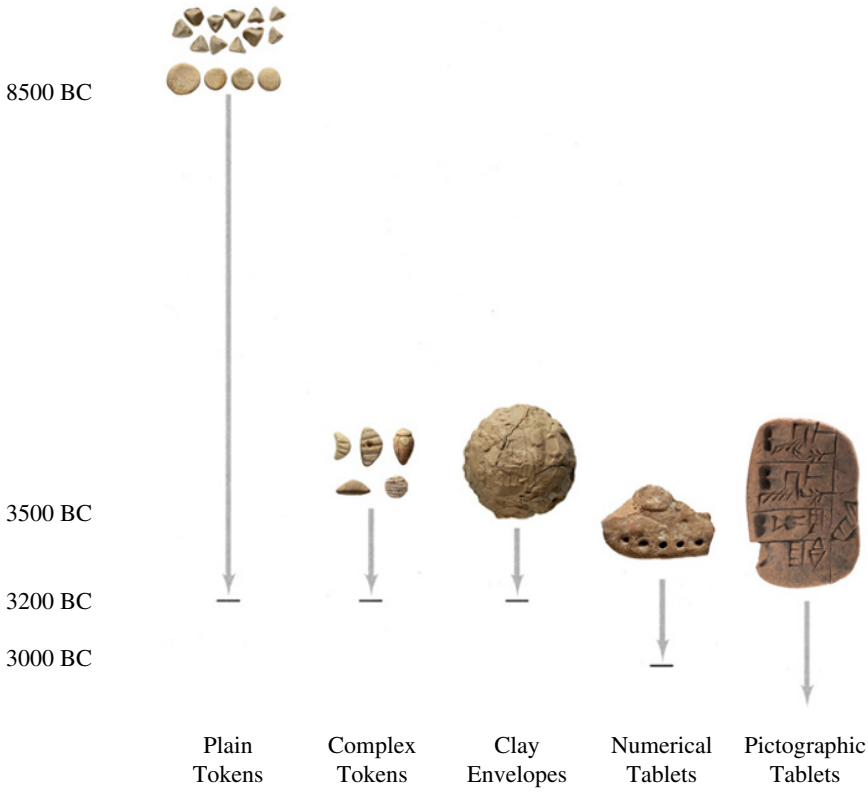


Figure 2.2 Administrative precursors of cuneiform. Source: Schmandt-Besserat 1992; after Englund 2004, 121, figure 5.12.

of cases, however, graphic shapes were borrowed from various pre-existing communicative devices that were decidedly not writing, such as long-established pictographic and iconographic elements from the visual arts of proto-literate period (Michalowski 1990, 59). In particular, a number of standards and emblems connected with deities, their cults, and temple households, which possessed powerful symbolic value, were drafted into the script. In the proto-literate period the boundary that would later rigorously separate writing from artistic, symbolic representations was more porous, and the two systems mixed more freely than they would in later periods. In certain instances, there appears to be a relationship, but likely only graphic, between individual cuneiform graphs and earlier tokens. The symbol that would become the graph for "small livestock" (i.e., sheep and goats), 𒈦, for instance, originally belonged to the accounting system represented by the complex tokens. When the script was invented, this symbol was borrowed from this system and assigned the meaning "small livestock".[2] The graphic form was borrowed – simple geometric shapes were used and re-used – but in all likelihood, based on its remarkably sparse attestation in the token system (sheep and goats were central to ancient Near Eastern economies), the meaning, or perhaps better meanings, it had in that earlier system were not (Zimansky 1993, 516-517).

The Archaic Text Corpus and Cuneiform Script Characteristics

The Uruk text corpus stems from excavations by the German Archaeological Institute between the 1928 and 1976 (for details, see Englund 1998, 18-41). The date traditionally given for the invention of writing in Mesopotamia is 3200 BCE; however, this is conventional. Securing a precise date for proto-cuneiform texts has proved elusive, as virtually all of the tablets were discovered in secondary archaeological contexts within the Eana temple precinct, specifically, in rubbish heaps that defy accurate stratigraphic analysis. The sun-hardened clay tablets, having obviously outlived their usefulness, were used along with other waste, such as potsherds, clay sealings, and broken mud bricks, as fill in leveling old foundations of Uruk IV in the preparation of new construction of Uruk III. Consequently, it is impossible to establish when the tablets were written and used, though it is virtually certain that they were executed in connection with the Eana, the dominant institution of Uruk.

Despite the difficulties surrounding the dating, two distinct phases are acknowledged in the evolution of the archaic script, based primarily on graphic styles, technique of execution, and complexity of the documents, all of which are suggestive of a chronological development. These two script stages correspond, but only indirectly, to the stratigraphy of the find spots. Thus, the script and tablets of the earlier phase are labeled Uruk IV, while the script and tablets from roughly one hundred years later are labeled Uruk III. Approximately five thousand proto-cuneiform tablets were unearthed at Uruk; however, these are not the only witnesses to the archaic script. Proto-cuneiform texts corresponding to the Uruk III tablets have been found at the northern Babylonian sites of Jemdat Nasr, Khafajah, and Tell Uqair, testifying to the fact that the new technology and its associated pedagogic apparatus quickly spread throughout Babylonia soon after its invention (in ancient Iran proto-cuneiform likely inspired the proto-Elamite script, c. 3000 BCE, contemporaneous with the Uruk III texts). Illicit excavations since the 1990's account for several hundred additional texts; these texts possibly originate from the ancient Babylonian cities of Umma, Adab, and Kish, and they have the advantage of being, generally, in better condition than those from Uruk, which, as noted, represent discarded rubbish and thus are frequently fragmentary. To date, the proto-cuneiform corpus numbers approximately 6,000 tablets and fragments.

The Uruk IV tablets, representing the earliest phase of writing, typically bear only a few graphs and are simple in format. The vast majority of graphs of this earliest phase of writing appear to share an iconic – that is pictographic – relationship with their referents, although these renderings are characteristically schematic and conventional, obscuring the identification of many of the objects depicted. It appears that only a small minority of graphs are in origin unmotivated symbols. Signs such as the aforementioned  (UDU) "small cattle", the graph  (MAŠ) for "male kid", as well as the numerical signs, which have graphic origins in the earlier token system, belong to this category. While many graphs depict objects in full and exhibit isomorphic relationships between shape and meaning, cuneiform writing from the outset attests a number of graphic conventions that are associative or metonymic in nature. These include, in addition to the previously

discussed use of standards and emblems to represent deities and their cult centers, the depiction of various containers to represent their contents, e.g. a bucket  (GA) for "milk"; a jar  (DUG) for "dairy fat"; and the portrayal of tools or objects to represent closely related offices or professions, e.g., a plow  (APIN) in professional designations involving cultivation; a pig  (ŠUBUR) for pig-herders. As also attested in other primary writing systems, proto-cuneiform made use of synecdoche or *pars pro toto* by which an entity is represented by an easily perceived, or particularly salient, part, such as the representation of various animals by schematic pictographs of the heads only, e.g.,  (GUD) "bull",  (AB_2) "cow", and the aforementioned  (ŠUBUR) "pig". Occasionally, pictographs have been paired with objects from the material culture extant in the archaeological record, such as the proposed identification of the distinctive and ubiquitous beveled-rim bowl, a diagnostic marker of the mid- to late-Uruk period, with the sign  (GAR), which was used in connection with cereal products in grain accounts (Englund 1998, 180-81). Cuneiform writing also makes use of deictic or indexical signs, such as the use of additional strokes and dots (known to the later indigenous tradition as *gunû* and *šessig*), which are used to graphically indicate marked semantic subfields, as in distinguishing  (SAÐ) "head" from  (KA) "mouth", and  (UDU) "sheep" from  (U_8) "ewe". This was a graphic means of economically generating new signs based on graphically and semantically unmarked ones, a process that served to increase the communicative capacity of the script while limiting the number of unrelated signs, which facilitated script transmission and mastery. Other graphic modifications that are essentially indexical in nature and were similarly made in the interests of limiting the graphic repertoire include rotating, inverting, and crossing signs, although the meanings imparted by these transformations in the archaic script are often not transparent.

The iconicity between graph and referent that characterized the majority of graphs of the Uruk IV corpus gradually diminished during the course of the paleographic evolution of the script, a development to which Uruk III texts already bear witness. The graphs of the Uruk IV phase include curvilinear lines that were drawn or approximated with multiple small strokes with a pointed stylus (Figure 2.3). In the Uruk III phase of the script, these curved lines were replaced by straight strokes that were inscribed with a stylus with a triangular cross-section. Additionally, the graphs were restricted to certain orientations; the indexical marks used to create derived signs through additional dots and strokes were standardized; and, in general, signs were simplified and depicted more abstractly. For example, in the rendering of graphs consisting of animal heads, facial features, which were rendered naturalistically in the Uruk IV phase, were now omitted or depicted schematically. These developments (which were likely made in the interests of efficiency, facilitating the efficient execution of signs in clay, as well as aesthetic concerns) would continue well into the third millennium. As a consequence of these developments, those signs that shared a pictographic relationship with their referents gradually lost this iconic quality over time, becoming conventionalized symbols — certainly contemporary users of the mature script regarded them as such, having no knowledge of the pictographic origins of certain graphs.

With the loss of curvilinear lines in particular, the script assumed its distinctive cuneiform appearance as graphs were pressed into clay in short wedge-like – that is, cuneiform – strokes (Figure 2.4). There are two further notable developments that distinguish early cuneiform

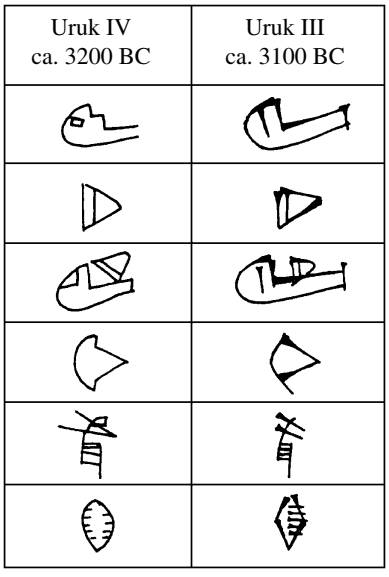


Figure 2.3 In the Uruk III texts, incising is replaced by impressing the triangular cross-sectioned stylus into the surface of the clay tablet. Source: After Nissen 1986, 320, figure 2.

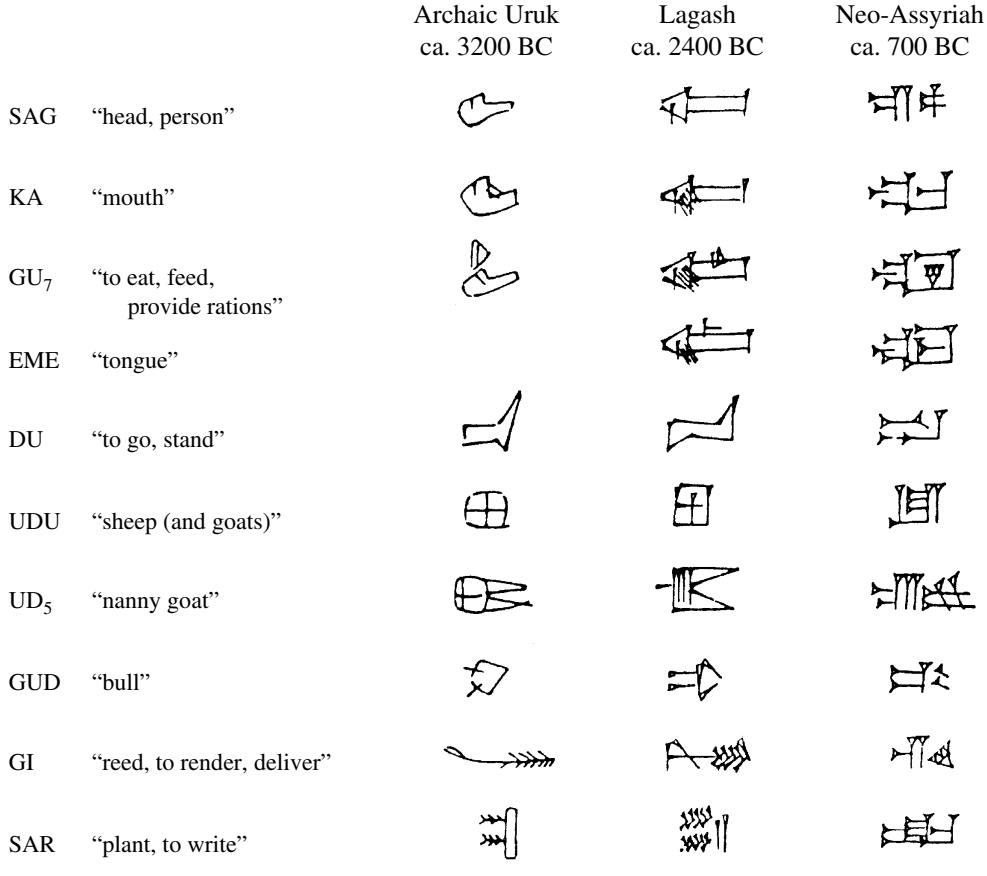


Figure 2.4 The evolution of cuneiform signs. Source: After Cooper 2004, 85.

from the later phases of the script. The first concerns the number of graphs employed in the system. Whereas the archaic script contained roughly 900 graphs, later cuneiform made do with about 600; however, there is great variation in the number and even the types of signs attested for various dialects. For the most part, the number of commonly used signs for a given dialect was often considerably less; Old Babylonian (c. 2000-1600 BCE), for example, made use of roughly 150 frequent signs. The second concerns the direction of the script. At some point – perhaps as early as the third millennium but certainly by the middle of the second – the graphs were rotated 90° counter-clockwise so that now they rested on their backs and the script was read from left to right rather than vertically (e.g.  became  (SAĜ) "head, person"). The reason for the change is obscure and much debated. Akkadian texts, which only make their appearance in sizable numbers in the second half of the third millennium, are read from left to right. A remarkable exception is the Code of Hammurabi, which is read from top to bottom and likely represents a purposeful archaizing attempt to mimic Sumerian writing of the early third millennium. Except for the inconsistent use of a word-divider mark in Old Assyrian texts, there are no punctuation marks in cuneiform. Often, there is no dividing space between morphemes, although signs may be distributed in lines or cases for the aesthetic purpose of minimizing blank spaces and providing a text that is, in modern typographical parlance, justified.

Unsurprisingly, numerical and metrological notation plays a prominent role in the archaic text corpus. Englund (1998, 111) observes that a full 90% of the archaic texts consists of numerical notations and structures. Roughly 60 graphs are devoted to expressing numerals, representing a class of graphs that are visually distinct from those denoting words. Numerical graphs were in origin not incised with a pointed stylus, as was the case with the word graphs, but were impressed with a round stylus held either perpendicular or at an oblique angle to the writing surface (Figures 2.1, 2.3; Nissen et al. 1993, 25). The use of rounded styli of various diameters to inscribe numbers is first attested by the clay envelopes and numerical tablets of the proto-literate period. These "curviform" numerals remained in use through the end of the third millennium, when they gradually gave way to cuneiform shapes inscribed with the pointed end of the stylus.

Structural Organization and Sign Types

By the middle of the third millennium the sign inventory of cuneiform was comprised of four types of signs: logograms, morphograms, phonetic syllabograms, and semantic classifiers known as determinatives (Civil 2013b, 3-4). Logograms represent a single independent word or a group of semantically related words – they primarily convey semantic content and only secondarily the pronunciations of the words represented. Morphograms represent bound morphemes regardless of the allomorph dictated by context and so may or may not represent the pronunciation of these morphemes (Woods 2010, 45). Syllabograms are syllabic units of pronunciation without semantic value, while determinatives are silent semantic classifiers that are not pronounced and have only a graphic reality. These four types of signs are formally indistinguishable from one another, and certain signs can assume multiple roles in different contexts. For instance, the sign AN, used logographically, represents "heaven, sky", phonetically, the syllable /an/, and as a semantic

determinative it is used in writing to categorize divinities. Sumerian writing remained, true to its roots, essentially logographic and morphemic, with syllabograms being used for proper names, loanwords, and some native morphemes. Akkadian writing, while employing the very same signs as Sumerian writing is, in contrast, predominantly syllabic. Indeed, the advent of a cuneiform syllabary owes itself mainly to the adaptation of the logographic script to express Semitic. Logograms are employed in Akkadian texts primarily for the representation of common words and technical terms. There is, however, considerable variation in the use logograms across Akkadian genres – roughly 3-5% of the signs in letters are logograms, while in omens the number may be as high as 80% (Civil 1992, 324).

Logograms

At the root of the cuneiform writing system, as is true of the other primary systems, is the word sign or logogram. Taken in isolation, logograms qualify theoretically as ideographs, signs that refer to ideas or concepts, as they may represent several lexemes belonging to a common semantic field. For instance, the graph DU, , originally a conventional depiction of a foot and lower leg in profile, could represent, among other values, /ŋen/, /du/, and /lah/, allomorphs of the verb meaning "to go" as well as /de/ and /tum/, allomorphs of the verb "to carry", and /gub/ "to stand" – actions that share a transparent semantic relationship and saliently involve the foot. Similarly, the graph KA, , represents the Sumerian words ka "mouth" and zu "tooth", as well as the less tangible inim "word", gu_3 "voice", and dug_4 "to speak" (the subscripted number is a modern convention for distinguishing and indexing homophonous signs). As these examples make clear, the vast majority of logograms were iconically motivated, having a pictographic, if conventional, relationship with their referents. Other examples include the picture of a reed,  (GI_4), for the Sumerian word for "reed", that is, /gi/; the graph  (KUR), for the word for "mountain", /kur/; and  KU_6 for /ku/ "fish". The majority of Sumerian morphemes are monosyllabic, which has implications for the generation of rebus-derived syllabograms.

The fundamentally logographic nature of Sumerian writing resulted in the suppression of morphophonemic variation as words were expressed by invariant graphs (see the discussion of morphograms below). Only exceptional syllabic spellings that violate the standard orthography can reveal the shape morphemes assume in connected text (although even in this case consonant clusters are completely obscured by the syllabic character of phonetic graphs). The use of semantic extension, or polyphony, whereby semantically related concepts are expressed by a common sign is a strategy also employed by the other primary writing systems as an economic means of limiting the number of unrelated logograms. The extensive exploitation of polyphony resulted in graphs that were data dense, bearing multiple meanings and the pronunciations associated with them.

In addition to polyphony, other organizing principles include the aforementioned use of additional strokes, hatch marks, and dots to graphically differentiate marked submeanings of a given semantic field. Another graphic means for expanding the communicative potential of the system, while limiting the number of unrelated signs, was semantic compounding, a distinctive feature of Sumerian writing and one attested already in the earliest proto-cuneiform texts. Often referred to as diri-compounds (after an ancient lexical list that includes many such writings), these are composites of individual graphs

selected on the basis of their semantic contribution to the whole; the phonetic values of the constituent graphs have no phonetic relationship to the aggregate. For example, there is the common administrative notation in the archaic texts,  (GU_7), which denotes "disbursement" (and in later texts the verb "to eat"). The composite graph consists of  (SAG) "head" and  (GAR), a bowl representing "a ration of food", which is likely to be connected with the ubiquitous beveled-rim bowls of the Late Uruk material culture. And there is the writing of the city of Larsa as UD+AB,[3] , where UD, , represents the sun (the pictograph is of the sun rising between two peaks) and AB, , depicts in origin perhaps a temple platform (or cultic installation). The combination denotes the city of Larsa, whose patron deity was the Sun-god Utu. The semantic criteria and associations that governed the ancient choice of graphs are, however, not always transparent. Yet, it is clear that such writings conveyed semantic information beyond that afforded by purely phonological writings: the writing UD.UNUG for Larsa intrinsically links the city to its patron deity, the sun-god Utu in a way that a phonetic writing cannot. Indeed, the inherent ability to convey semantic information beyond speech is a distinct advantage that logographic systems boast over their phonological counterparts and one that no doubt factors into the perseverance of logographies despite being encumbered by large sign inventories.

The lexical polyvalence of logograms raises fundamental questions regarding the origins and nature of incipient writing (Krebernik 2013, 188). Was it, in original conception, an object – as opposed to a language-based system in which graphs first and foremost represented objects and ideas associated with those objects? That is, did writing only come at the end of the Uruk period to represent the specific words attached to those objects through a process of habit and convention? Or was it from the outset a language-based system in which graphs, originally designating single lexemes, were extended to represent a group of words belonging to a common semantic field? In support of the former possibility, we may point to the fact that the order of signs in texts prior to the middle of the third millennium characteristically does not follow the flow of speech. Further, there are the object-specific numerical systems, which have their origins in the prehistoric token system that prefigured writing, along with their derivative sub-systems, the distinctions between which likely have only a graphic reality and do not reflect different pronunciations. And there are the deictic or indexical signs, such as the additional strokes, hatch marks, and dots, which visually indicate semantic subfields independent of speech. Similarly, there are graphs such as  (N_{57}) and (N_{58}), which are combined with numerals to indicate, respectively, the length and width measurements of fields in archaic administrative texts. These graphs may represent non-linguistic, indexical signs rather than logograms with unique, unambiguous pronunciations. The non-linguistic aspect of the writing system can also be witnessed in the widespread use of the semantic compounding, whereby the writing of certain lexemes is based entirely on semantic criteria, with the phonetic shape of individual elements of the compound having no relationship to the pronunciation of the whole. A related semantic strategy productive in the archaic corpus, and one that is also likely associated with the semantic classifiers discussed, is the use of frame or matrix signs (Glassner 2003, 143-144; Wagensonner 2010, 299-302). These are container or vessel signs that indicate a broad semantic field and enclose graphs that semantically, or perhaps in some cases phonetically, specify an object or lexeme within that

field. For example, the sign DUG, , "vessel" encloses a great variety of signs in proto-cuneiform lexical – and to a more limited degree, administrative – texts as a means of specifying various commodities that were stored or dispensed in vessels, e.g.  (DUG×NAGA),  (DUG×ANŠE),  (DUG×MUŠEN).

It is presumably for these reasons that some scholars of the archaic period prefer to describe the graphs of proto-cuneiform as representing ideographs rather than logographs. But some of these same characteristics hold for the mature writing system. Graphs maintain their polyvalence in later texts when there is no question of the linguistic basis of writing. However, in context – the writing system in actual use – each graph has one and only one value and so represents a unique pronunciation in connected text. That is, in context logograms have an unambiguous sound value in addition to their intrinsic semantic content. Determining the proper phonetic value of a logogram is dependent upon the reader's semantic and syntactic interpretation of the text. If cuneiform graphs were originally conceived as representing objects directly rather than the words for those objects as the evidence cited above suggests, then these ideographs were quickly transformed into logographs through repeated conventional use. The beginnings of this development were already underway in the Uruk IV period as shown by the sporadic appearance of rebus writings (see below). But the fossilization of ideographs into logographs may not have been in full swing until the following Uruk III period – the period from which the majority of the phonetic writings derive, when writing was employed in more complex ways that required specificity, and when, importantly, lexical lists – thematically arranged lists of word lists, which presuppose signs with precise lexical values – emerge as a major genre.

Morphograms

Morphograms are signs that represent bound morphemes regardless of the allomorphic shape dictated by context – one allomorph is selected to represent all others. Morphograms are essentially syllabograms that function logographically, representing a transition between logographic and full-fledged phonetic writing, and, as such, are primarily a feature of Sumerian writing and, to an extent, of early Semitic writing as well. Yet there are significant differences between logograms and morphograms. Whereas a logogram gives no direct indication of phonetic shape, and no one allomorph is suggested or privileged in a given context, a morphogram selects one allomorph to represent all others and so necessarily has a phonological value. Additionally, while the majority of logograms graphically have, in origin, an iconic relationship with their referents, morphograms often have distinct origins, or, like phonograms, are less commonly derived secondarily through the rebus principle (see below). Despite these differences, morphograms may be seen as part and parcel of the fundamental logographic basis of early cuneiform.

More generally, morphograms represent a conceptually basic or default form of a morpheme. The burden of supplying the appropriate "surface" or phonetic form of the morpheme was left to readers who did so by relying on their native competence with the language. One had to know the language in order to render what was written into intelligible speech. For example, the verbal form pronounced /hanašumu/ "he should give (it) to him" could be written *he-na-šum*$_2$*-e* (in addition to the more phonetic *ha-na-šum*$_2$*-mu*),

a writing that preserves the basic or underlying form of the individual morphemes contained in the verb but obscures the phonetic changes owing to the assimilations that take place in speech. In the interests of economy, morphophonemic variation could be omitted in the writing where predictable from the context. Even after the development of an adequate syllabary, it was always possible for a scribe to employ the morphograms that were the basic building blocks of the early script. One potential advantage in doing so was that fewer signs needed to be memorized and used so that messages could be written more succinctly. But the overriding motivation behind the perseverance of morphograms appears to lie in the continuity of tradition and the prestige associated with the old orthography.

Consistent with representing a transition between logographic and phonetic writing, morphograms are a more common feature of the early script of the mid-third millennium, being gradually replaced by phonographic writings thereafter. The written forms of the subjunctive-optative modal prefix *he*$_2$- aptly exemplifies the historical distribution of morphograms and reflects the increasing phonetization of writing as invariant morphograms gave way to phonograms that reflected allomorphic variation and more closely reflected the spoken language (Civil and Biggs 1966, 15):

Early Dynastic (c. 2500 BCE)	*Ur III (c. 2100 BCE)*	*Old Babylonian (c. 1800 BCE)*
‹HE$_2$› for /he/, /hi/, /ha/, /hu/	‹HE$_2$› for /he/, /hi/ ‹HA› for for /ha/, /hu/	‹HE$_2$› for /he/, /hi/ ‹HA› for /ha/ ‹HU› for /hu/

Morphograms also make an appearance in the writing of Eblaite, which on the one hand relies heavily on the logography of the Sumerian orthographic tradition and on the other shares many characteristics of early syllabic writing of Old Akkadian.

Syllabograms

Through the use of the rebus principle, whereby a logogram could be used to express a homonym, a third class of signs arose, syllabograms, which possessed sound but not meaning. That is, the phonetic value associated with one word, most often something with a ready iconic representation, could be used to write another that was identical, or nearly so, in pronunciation. Such writings break the semantic–phonetic bond that was implicit in the original conception of the logogram, discarding the semantic information while preserving the phonetic content. As with other primary systems, rebus-derived phonetic signs play a critical role in expanding the flexibility and communicative potential of early writing systems. Phonetic signs allow for the rendering of those elements of language that do not lend themselves to iconic representation, for instance, grammatical affixes, prepositions, and – of considerable importance to the historical development of cuneiform – the phonetic rendering of personal names and foreign words. The agglutinative structure of Sumerian and the high frequency of monosyllabic words, which contributed to pervasive homonymy in the language, may have facilitated the exploitation of the rebus principle. For instance, in later cuneiform the sign for /sar/ "garden" (originally a pictograph of a

garden bed, ) was used to write the homophonous, but more abstract verb /sar/ "to write"; similarly, the sign originally representing "water", , /a/ in Sumerian, was used for the syllable /a/, and so could be used to represent the locative case in Sumerian, which shared the same phonetic shape. The syllabary of mature cuneiform writing exhibits considerable homophony, the existence of two or more signs with the same phonological value, as well as polyphony, signs with two or more phonological values. Both characteristics complicated the overall structure of cuneiform writing. For instance, the syllable /gi/ is expressed by 27 graphs, gi, gi_2, gi_3, gi_4, gi_5 …. gi_{27}; the sign KA is highly polyphonous, bearing over the long history of cuneiform the values qa_3, ga_{14}, pi_4, zu_2, su_{11}, du_{11}, $i\check{s}_5$, zib_4 in addition to ka. It should be pointed out, however, that for a given corpus defined both geographically and temporally, homophony and polyphony are much more limited than the preceding example suggests. Typically, two or three signs at most represent a given value, the choice of which was often governed by particular scribal conventions. Owing to the fact that early Sumerian relied primarily on logograms and morphograms, the development of a full syllabary for cuneiform was closely tied to the adaptation of the script to express Akkadian in the second half of the third millennium, which made extensive use of syllabic writings.

In accord with the syllabic shape of Sumerian morphemes, the phonograms of the rebus-derived syllabary of the mature writing system could be V, CV, VC, and more rarely CVC. Less commonly, in mature cuneiform writing, syllabograms are derived from the Akkadian reading of a logogram, as in *id* from Akkadian *idum* "arm", *el* from *ellum* "pure", pu_3 from *pûm* 'mouth', *dan* from *dannum* "strong", and *iz* from *iṣum* "wood", a development that served to increase the homophony exhibited by the system. Polysyllabic phonograms are uncommon in cuneiform writing, representing exceptional uses of the rebus principle to express polymorphemic segments, as in Sumerian gaba- for standard ga-ba-. Individual consonants could not be written. The presence of VC syllabograms represents a typological rarity among the syllabaries of the world's writing systems, among which CV graphs dominate. However, in agreement with typological tendencies, spelling conventions demonstrate a preference for CV signs. For instance, spelling norms often required the written expression of a superfluous consonant to avoid a V sign: Urim.a [Urim.locative] "in Larsa" is typically written $Urim_2$-ma, not *Urim-a, with the <m> of the syllabogram <ma> having no phonological basis. In other instances, what is traditionally understood as a CV sign is used in lieu of a CVC sign: li_2-ga for /lidga/ (a vessel representing a unit of capacity). However, this distinction is perhaps more of a function of modern transliteration practices than an intrinsic property of the writing system – many CV signs are arguably better understood as CV(C) signs. Since there was a limited repertoire of CVC phonograms, CVC sequences were often rendered CV-VC; even in cases where there was an appropriate CVC sign, a CV-VC spelling may have been an option, for example, $na\text{-}am_3$ for nam; or, as in the above example, li_2-id-ga is also attested as a writing for /lidga/.

In the mature script, particularly, syllabograms could serve as glosses or complements as a means of disambiguating or clarifying the phonetic shape, or part, of a sign. Phonetic complements could be integrated within the graphic structure of a graph, similar to the use of phonetics coupled to radicals in Chinese writing. For example, the graph representing eme "tongue",  , is a combination of the graph for "mouth", (KA), which

denotes a broad semantic field, and the inscribed element ME,  , which has the phonetic value /me/ and serves as a phonetic sign specifying a word within this semantic field by indicating its pronunciation. Similarly, the graph for lulim "stag",  , consists of a graph that originally depicted the head of an animal, which is modified by the syllabograms lu,  , and lim, , which establish the pronunciation. Such graphically integrated phonograms were obligatory and could not be omitted in writing. Syllabograms could be inscribed entirely within certain matrix or frame signs, as in  (MEN) "crown" consists of the frame-sign  (GA_2) and two inscribed phonetic signs: me,  , and en,  , i.e. MEN = GA_2×ME+EN (cf. proto-cuneiform MEN = GA_2×EN , where EN is plausibly a phonetic complement [cf. Englund, 1998, 77 n. 158]). Graphically distinct phonetic complements could also optionally supplement logograms and more rarely phonograms, as, for instance, the graphs $ŋa_2$ and ar, specifying the reading of the logogram ŋar "to place", in $^{ŋa_2}gar^{ar}$, or ar indicating the reading of the syllabogram mar in the geographical name Mar^{ar}-ha-$ši^{ki}$. Syllabographs could also appear sequentially expressing multi-syllabic strings, which was common in the expression of foreign and loan words.

Akkadian texts are written primarily with syllabograms: *a-wi-lum* 'man' (cf. logographic Sumerian **lu**$_2$ "man"), *e-ka-al-lum* "palace" (cf. Sum. **e**$_2$**-gal**, literally, "house"-"big"), *ik-šu-ud* "he arrived" (3ms. pret. of *kašadum* "to arrive").[4] Syllabograms were also used as phonetic complements to indicate the appropriate Akkadian reading of logograms inherited from Sumerian writing though their use was less common and more heterogeneous than in the Sumerian context. The use of a phonetic complement with morphophonemic reference may limit the interpretation of a logogram to one Akkadian word from among several possible readings by specifying the pronunciation of the last part of the word, for instance, KUR-*tum* for *mātum* (nom.) "country", versus KUR-u_2-*um* for *šadûm* (nom.) "mountain", where the words for "country" and "mountain" are homonymous in Sumerian. In other cases a phonetic complement may indicate part of the morphological shape of a given Akkadian word, as in the appropriate case ending (A.ŠAG_4-*lum* for *eqlum* (nom.) "field", A.ŠAG_4-*lam* for *eqlam* (acc.), A.ŠAG_4-*lim* for *eqlim* (gen); or a possessive pronominal suffix, as in A.ŠAG_4-*šu* for *eqelšu* (nom./acc.), or *eqlīšu* (gen.) "his field" (Huehnergard and Woods 2004, 224). As these examples demonstrate, phonetic complements in Akkadian texts provide morphophonetic information, establishing the appropriate word and its grammatical ending.

It must be emphasized that, despite the extensive use of phonetic writing in the mature script, phonetic signs play a remarkably minor role in the proto-cuneiform writing system – much less so than they do in early Egyptian, Chinese, and Mayan writing. Only in the first quarter of the third millennium did rebus-generated syllabograms begin to play a significant and increasingly important part in writing. More certain examples of phonetic writings in proto-cuneiform typically date to the Uruk III writing phase and include the moon-god's name, Nanna, which is written URI_3+NA,  , where NA, , is a phonetic complement with the phonetic value /na/, indicating that the graph URI_3, , is to be pronounced /nanna/; PIRIG+NUNUZ,  , where the complement NUNUZ, , has the value /za/, indicating that the composite graph has the phonetic value /az(a)/; the sign designating a reed,  (GI_4), pronounced /gi/, used to express the homophonous verb /gi/ "to return"; and the syllabic spellings of the city names $Ša_3$-bu and Gir_2-su (Englund 2009, 9-10; Krebernik 2013, 189-190).

Semantic Determinatives

A fourth, smaller set of signs consists of semantic classifiers that Assyriologists refer to as determinatives. Determinatives are auxiliary logograms that are used to identify certain nouns as belonging to specific semantic classes. They exist only within the realm of writing and have no phonological value. Graphs used as determinatives may serve as logograms or syllabograms in other contexts; in transliteration, determinatives are typically superscripted according to modern Assyriological convention. Determinatives conventionally either precede or follow the words they classify.

Common determinatives that precede their referents include dingir "god" for divine names, dug "vessel" for pottery, ŋiš "wood, tree" for trees and wooden objects, kuš "skin, leather", for leather objects, lu_2 "person" for professions, na_4 "stone" for stones and stone objects, tug_2 "textile, garment" for the names of garments and cloth, u_2 "grass, plant" for names of plants, urudu "copper" for metals and metal objects; those that follow their referents include ku_6 "fish" for the names of fish, mušen "bird" for the names of birds, and ki "place, earth" for place names. Although extremely common with certain nouns, determinatives remained optional and were not mandatory for the writing of any word. Mature cuneiform writing has approximately nineteen commonly used determinatives. Egyptian writing similarly possesses purely graphemic semantic classifiers, although these are more numerous and productive (applying to both nouns and verbs) than they are in cuneiform.

The status of determinatives is uncertain for earliest texts, but they appear to be present in the Uruk III corpus on the basis of lexical lists where graphs such as ŋiš "wood", mušen "bird", and ku_6 "fish" plausibly serve a semantic classificatory, rather than a phonetic, function. Determinatives may have evolved from the strategy of semantic and graphic compounding (discussed above) that was already operational in the earliest texts. As classifiers, they economically increase the communicative potential of writing by semantically extending the reach of individual signs without expanding the sign repertoire. For instance, the graph APIN, which in origin pictographically depicted a plow, had the value /apin/ "plow" when preceded by the ŋiš "wood" determinative; the same sign, when preceded by the lu_2 "person" determinative, had the value /engar/ "cultivator".

Relationship with Sumerian

Writing is typically defined as the unambiguous visible representation of speech; those forms of communication that convey ideas directly and are unhinged from spoken utterances do not qualify as writing according to this definition. A purely logographic system, without any phonetic component (no such writing system actually exists) would pose daunting problems in terms of determining the underlying language. For instance, one may intuitively perceive that the pictograph  means "head", but taken in isolation, the graph gives us no indication of its pronunciation and hence of the underlying language. One would have to turn to the rendering of grammatical elements and syntactic order to attempt this determination. If this information is not indicated in the script, it is theoretically impossible to determine the underlying language, for the division between writing

and other forms of visual representation would be blurred in the absence of an explicit link between script and speech.

The evidence that the language represented by the proto-cuneiform script is, in fact, Sumerian rests on perhaps fifteen instances of phonetic writings that have been discovered to date in the corpus, many of which are debated. Moreover, the common Sumerian personal names known from later periods cannot be recognized in the earliest proto-cuneiform texts. Either the Sumerian onomasticon, or the convention for representing individuals in writing, was radically different from that of the third millennium, or, alternatively – and arguably less likely – the names of the archaic period are not Sumerian (see Krebernik 2013, 188; Englund 2009). Most scholars today assume that Sumerian underlies the earliest texts from Mesopotamia. As for proto-cuneiform script representing writing as traditionally defined, we must accept that there is no sharp division between what we know to be true phonological writing (glottography) and more symbolic modes of communication (semasiography) – and that there is an ambiguous gray zone, or continuum, between the two. At the same time, proto-cuneiform forces us to consider the types of communicative systems out of which true, phonetic, writing may have arisen. Rebus writings were present at the beginning, or so it appears, but they were unimportant to the organization and structure of the proto-cuneiform system. Indeed, the proliferation of phonetic writings, in terms of the development of a syllabary, was not driven primarily by a desire to better express Sumerian vernacular but rather by the necessity to write foreign words, personal names, and, particularly, the adaptation of the script to write Akkadian. That Sumerian writing became more closely bound to speech was a consequence of these developments.

The Early Dynastic texts from Ur, c. 2800 BC, represent a watershed in the development of cuneiform and its application. Sumerian personal names are attested with certainty and in considerable numbers. Grammatical morphemes begin to be indicated in writing, a development that is bound up with the evolution of an incipient Sumerian syllabary. For instance, the syllabograms -ga and -da are used in conjunction with the logograms zig_3 "to rise" and pad_3 "to nominate", respectively, to write the participles zig_3.a (wr. zig_3-ga) "risen" and pad.a (wr. pad_3-da) "nominated", both occurring in personal names. The increasing expansion of the syllabary and expression of grammatical markers were trends that would continue through the third millennium. Literary texts, including myths, hymns, incantations, and proverbs make their first certain appearance, alongside lexical and administrative texts, in the epigraphic corpus from Fara (c. 2600 BC). The slightly later texts from Abu Salabikh (c. 2500) consist primarily of lexical and literary texts, some of which find parallels at Fara, attesting to an established scholastic tradition. Sumerian verbal forms are well attested in these mid-third millennium texts. As an agglutinative language, Sumerian verbs consist of an unchanging root to which a series of affixes are appended that express various verbal categories, such as mood, voice, concord, aspect, and oblique cases. Verbal roots are expressed with logograms, while the bound morphemes represented by affixes are expressed with morphograms or syllabograms. The expression of verbal affixes became increasingly obligatory, drawing the writing system more closely to speech.

The administrative texts of the Uruk period attest a limited number of graphs that correspond to verbal roots, although it is uncertain whether these isolated graphs conceal complete predicates that were expressed orally, or, perhaps more likely, represent labels,

mnemonically indicating certain administrative actions. Indeed, the earliest attempts to represent connected narrative in the archaic period – the much discussed and enigmatic lexical list known as "Tribute" or "Archaic Word List C" – may have constituted an even simpler, experimental stage of writing, in which predicates were omitted altogether with only their core complements being explicitly expressed in writing (Civil 2013a, 17-18). Such an elliptical system could only serve as an *aide-mémoire*, suggesting the barest outlines of a narrative well known to the reader, and would be entirely unsuitable to recording new information.

The Ur and particularly Fara corpora attest verbal forms with syllabically expressed prefixes. Indication of these bound morphemes becomes increasingly obligatory and explicit during the course of the third and early second millennia. The Ur texts, for instance, appear to attest the finite verbal form a-gid$_2$ (gid$_2$ "to measure") in connection with field measurements, where the prefix a-, is a stative or passive-resultative marker. Fara texts include verbal forms such an-na-ba (ba "to allot"), for a.na.ba, where -na- is the third-person singular dative marker (possibly to be compared to the occurrence of the graph BA expressing an administrative action in Uruk texts). Testifying to these diachronic developments is the verbal form mu.na.n.du$_3$ "he (the ruler) built (the temple) for him/her (the deity)", which is particularly common in third- and second-millennium royal inscriptions. The verb is often written mu-du$_3$ in the inscriptions of Ur-Nanshe of Lagash (c. 2500 BCE), as mu-na-du$_3$ in texts of Gudea (c. 2100 BCE), and as mu-na-an-du$_3$ in the Old Babylonian period (c. 1800 BCE). Sumerian writing became more explicit in its expression of morphology so that by the end of the third millennium the grammatical elements of speech were, for the most part, reflected in writing. Yet economy of expression always remained a fundamental feature of Sumerian writing, and it was always possible to omit certain information that was deemed to be retrievable from the broader context.

NOTES

1 Following Houston (2004, 292).
2 The proto-cuneiform sign forms used in this paper are copied from the on-line resources provided by the Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative (http://cdli.ucla.edu).
3 The symbol '+' is a modern Assyriological convention for indicating the joining of two signs as a ligature; the symbol '×', introduced below, is used to indicate the inscribing of one sign within another.
4 Note that, in accord with Assyriological conventions, Akkadian is distinguished from Sumerian by the use of italics.

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CHAPTER THREE

The Development of Egyptian Writing in the Fourth and Early Third Millennium BCE

Ludwig Morenz

Introduction

From a cross-linguistic point of view, Ancient Egyptian is attested with an extraordinary depth in written form, although the amount of attested texts can differ significantly from period to period. Ancient Egyptian was clearly and for us sometimes more and sometimes less easy to trace, practiced for over 3000 years, with the inclusion of Coptic for over 5000 years (Loprieno 1995). The history of the language can directly be conceived in the written sources, in addition to inferences that can be drawn from phonemic inventories and the lexicon (Kammerzell, 1994; Behrens, 1984/5).

This article looks at the periods of Proto- and Early Egyptian. Language was, for the first time, deliberately transformed into script in Egypt as well as in Mesopotamia in the second half of the fourth and the early third millennium BCE, (for Mesopotamia see Glassner 2000; Selz 2000). At first, a pictorial script was created, in which specific sounds or phonemes were only partially notated. In order to represent sounds, the rebus principle, for which see further below, became of great importance.

For the early period of writing, historical and archaeological sources present a problem regarding the differentiation of language and script when discussing these two communication devices. The following describes the written language, while spoken language can only be deduced with limitations for distant observers such as ourselves – although it can and has to be assumed as a basis.

The contexts of the use of writing are, in particular, the socio-economic domain, the medial complex, and the conception of the imaginary. A methodological problem exists in that distinguishing these fields is not clearly possible in the sense of system theory.

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The world of signs, and within those, script in particular, overlaps with all of them from its very beginning. On the other hand, we are able to grasp the development of pictographic writing with the strikingly stronger notation of synsemantic words (instead of, almost only, autosemantic words) in the *Heliopolis-revolution* of the writing system (see below), in which, besides autosemantic nouns, synsemantic elements such as pronouns, prepositions, and particles were set down in writing in order to express complex facts in written form by means of language in its spatial, temporal, or causal connection. The written text achieved fundamental autonomy in the context of sacred texts (as, for example, in the inscription of the Djoser shrine from Heliopolis, which, for the first time exhibits all known lexical types of the Egyptian language in a text). At this developmental stage of the writing system, narrative messages could now largely be presented in a coherent and clear-cut manner (Morenz 2007).

Working Definition of Script and its Relation to Other Graphic Communication Systems

Script only seems to be a self-evident everyday term. Old Egyptian culture, for example, did not distinguish terminologically between "writing" and "drawing". Both were designated as *zẖ3*, a terminology that is also known from Greek, where γραφειν can equally designate "writing" and "drawing". The same terminological breadth was, for example, also practiced in Mayan culture, where it is represented in the lexeme *tz'ib*. Since the difference between "writing" and "drawing" was not be expressed terminologically, it is possible that the nature of the sign itself represented the common denominator that was in focus in this cultural context.

The founder of modern Linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure, put language onto a systematically higher level than its realization in the forms of "speaking" and "writing" (de Saussure 1916). Script could thus reflect an independent communication system besides speaking, although they are in a close relationship with each other. De Saussure, however, clearly devalued this independent dimension of script in its linguistic relevance. In this sense, script was often only treated as an epiphenomenon in the field of linguistics (Bloomfield 1914; Coulmas 1981), although both linguists and philosophers such as J. Vachek and J. Derrida criticized this evaluation (Vachek 1939, 1973; Derrida 1976). Neither the complicated graphical process nor the sheer materiality of the communication are aspects that should be neglected.

In fact, it is possible to operate with a differentiation between *script in a narrow sense* and *script in a broader sense*. Although there certainly existed fluent boundaries between these two polar types, they are nevertheless clearly noticeable as poles in a continuum. The *script in a broader sense* could more broadly be described as a semiotic system, code, notation, or the like. The following features seem to be particularly relevant in this regard:

- Communication (= social interaction)
- Semanticity (= content)
- Certain permanence (= communication in space)
- Visibility, perceptibility (= medium, materialty)

- Certain linearity (= order of signs)
- Conventionality (= relatively limited inventory of signs)
- Certain rules (= order, layout)
- Precision (= recognizability of message)
- Dissociation of concrete speech situation (= autonomy of message)

Script in a broader sense is spatial (with affinity to the eye) and has a tendency for statics (origin in picture), while speaking is temporal and has an affinity to the ear. Text is further more abstract than a concrete speech situation. The materialized communication can, by bringing the model to its limits, be understood as a technique for solving societal problems – its socio-cultural frame being the creation of an *extended communication situation* ("zerdehnte Kommunikationssituation", Ehlich 1994, 2007). This was of interest in both sacral and socio-economic contexts.

In order to define *script in a narrow sense*, it is necessary to only add one other criterion to the distinction of codes, *script in a wider sense*, and similar terms, namely the relation to language on the phonetic level. The specific characteristic of *script in a narrow sense* is a certain phonetic dimension in the codification of language. Internal reasons and principles for the phoneticization of the picture in the Nile valley of the fourth millennium BCE were, among others, the semantics of proper names as well as the importance of establishing the meaning of foreign words (such as place and personal names). At first, primarily autosemantic nouns, such as proper names, were written down.

The phoneticization of pictures meant a gradual de-iconization; this could take effect independently of the figurative character of a sign (as in the strongly figurative one-consonantal signs of the *m*-owl). Script in Egypt, however, did not simply represent a "cold" or detached communication technology, but rather was culturally "hot" and represented a domain of meaning and sense, and social distinction. This also involves the question regarding the elite and probably low literacy in the Nile valley, although there are some issues that need to be considered:

- There exist no certain data for the early periods. We do not know the overall population numbers of the Nile valley nor the percentage of literate people. Nevertheless, we may assume less than 1% to have been literate.
- There is the possibility of different levels of literacy.
- Use of script in a substitute role (the king does not write himself but has others writing for him; see Morenz 2004, 240).
- Imitation of script (as attested in seals since the early dynastic period; see Fischer 1972).

The Rebus Principle and the Phoneticization of Pictures

The oldest rebus writings from the Nile valley date around 3200 BCE. The first phonographic writings come from archaic labels from the royal necropolis of Abydos, where signs such as the *b3*-bird lost their pictographic character altogether and only represent a phonetic value, in this case *b3*.[1]

Perhaps the oldest known phonetic use of a sign in the world is found on a seal inscription from the period before 3200 BCE from the archaic necropolis of Abydos (U. Hartung, 1998, 187-217, 201, Abb. 8).

The seal impression shows the head of a cow and stars in the center of the impression. Despite the small size of the depiction, it is possible to notice a stylized head with five stars, one at each ear and each tip of the horns, and one over the top of the head. This type of image is also known from other contemporary depictions (Morenz 2011).[2] This sign is followed by a bird sign that probably further qualifies the cow head with stars. In this context, it can most likely be read as phonogram *b3*.[3] We are thus facing a written notation in a narrow sense and we can deduce a reading *b3(.t)* for the two central signs that are accentuated by their size (Morenz 2004, 60-63). The two central signs are framed by three rows of *mountains (?) + canidea*, which can be understood as sacral indicators. At least they do not function phonetically but rather ideographically. In addition, there is another sign on the seal, which can be interpreted as a paratextual marker in the function of a word divider. This seal inscription from the time between 3300-3200 BCE can thus be read as *b3(.t)* = "(goddess) Bat" and contains the oldest attestation of a divine name represented in writing. Another seal was found at the same location (grave Abydos Uj 210), whose central sign, which can be distinguished by its size, clearly reflects a *b3-* bird.

Corresponding to the other seal inscription, it is likely that this inscription reflects the reading *b3(.t)* = "(goddess) Bat" as well. These two seals thus reflect a more complex phono-semantic notation () compared to the purely phonographic writing ().

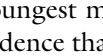
The first independent phonetic values were created from original purely pictorial signs through this technique of separating the pictographic character and phonetic value of the sign in the fourth millennium BCE. This derivational process had immense potential and shaped the development of the script in the Nile valley for millennia.

The phonetic aspect of language is, of course, never represented in a relation of 1:1. Script is not simply an archive of speech, not even in functionally purely phonographically operating alphabetic writing. Important phenomena of spoken language such as accent, rhythm, etc. often remain unknown. When needed, these can be introduced through specific notation devices.

Radical Phoneticization in Graphophonic Writing: Mono-Consonantal Signs

The phonological work during the development of the script consisted of breaking up the flow of sounds that make up a word into smaller units. Besides ideograms, semograms, and determinatives, this type of phono-semantic hybrid also employed three-, two- and mono-consonantal signs (Schenkel 2003; Polis and Rosmorduc 2015). Mono-consonantal signs are, from a systematic point of view, the most "phonographic" hieroglyphs. From the perspective of the history of writing, these phonograms functioned as a type of *determinatives of sound*, before the meaning and use of this type of signs gradually shifted during the long history of the development of writing.

The first known mono-consonantal sign, the *ḏ*-snake, is likewise already attested in the labels from the grave of Abydos, more specifically from the labels Uj 142 and 143.

The majority of Egyptian mono-consonantal signs were created during the Hieraconpolite and Memphite reforms of the script. The formation of a systematic and quasi-alphabetical inventory of phonologically relevant consonants was completed with the creation of the presumably youngest mono-consonantal sign  no later than around 2800 BCE. It is hardly a coincidence that the sign was first used for the notation of the royal name *nṯr - ḥt* ("divine in body"; *Horus-name* of king Djoser) according to our attestations. It is possible that the sign was developed to more accurately notate the royal name *nṯr - ḥt* phonetically. Until further proof, I assume that such a specific historical background can be plausible in certain cases.

The level of abstraction in the systematic creation of an inventory of mono-consonantal signs was a remarkable phonological achievement that was accomplished by numerous scribes remaining anonymous. At least from the last phase on (around 2900 BCE), we can notice a kind of consonantal proto-alphabet, although it was not used in isolation but rather within the broader Egyptian writing system of the Nile valley, which consisted of a mix of phonograms and semograms.

The inventory of mono-consonantal signs is particularly instructive concerning the process of a more or less phonological analysis of the Egyptian language by the Egyptians themselves. This includes the old question, if the signs truly only represent a consonant, or whether they are structurally to be explained as a combination of consonant + Ø-vowel (Schenkel 1981). The majority of hieroglyphic mono-consonantal signs can be explained easily. In words with weak second consonants, the value was determined based on the acrophonic principle, as in = *ra3* – "mouth, saying". The selection of other signs, however, remains unclear. For example, it is rather unclear why "foot" was used to represent the phonetic value *b*. The traditional Egyptological explanation that it stands for *bw* – "place (where the foot is put)" does not seem particularly straight forward, although it is difficult to find a more obvious explanation. Another example is the sign used for *n* and not foor *m*, despite the fact that an association with "water" (*mw*) seems to suggest itself. Such peculiarities of the hieroglyphic inventory show that the history of the selection of signs is thus far only partially traceable for us.

How much did the practical suitability of speech play a role with mono-consonantal signs, how much a *path-dependence*? According to Kammerzell, the mono-consonantal sign represented a velar phoneme distinct from , despite the fact that this distinction is only of limited phonological relevance during the history of the Egyptian language and thus remained a phenomenon known only from the margins of Egyptian writing (Peust 1999, 111; similarly also Schenkel 2004, 33 and 35).

Developmental Stages of the Early Script in the Nile Valley – a Historical Sketch of the First 500 Years

It is possible to distinguish several stages within the long period of the development of writing in Egypt. In the model presented here, I am connecting the different stages with the names of residences since early writing in the Nile valley is closely connected to religious and administrative centers. I am suggesting a model consisting of five stages for the first five hundred years of Egyptian writing. This model is presented in the following

overview that includes the most significant innovations of each stage, although it has to be noted that other changes did take place in addition to the mentioned phenomena.

- **Proto-script** had an elaborate system of signs but no phonetic dimension (Morenz 2004). It was used since the fifth millennium BCE or even earlier.
  - *Icon*: , crown-sign functions as graphic metonym for "rule".
- **Revolution of Abydos** reflects the creation of a pictographic-script. The first wave of phoneticization happened around 3250-3200 BCE.
  - *Icon*: , the sign is not used as a picture of the bird but as phonogram for the phonetic value *b3*
- **Reform of Hieraconpolis** shows a clear development of the script with the graphic fixation of complex utterances around 3100/3050 BCE (Morenz 2007).
  - *Icon*: , grapho-phonetic symbologram,[4] pictographic fixation of complex utterances.
- **Reform of Memphis** with a clear development of the writing system; creation of an inventory of signs and differentiation of functions of signs, at the beginning of the third millennium BCE.
  - *Icon*:  and , first used as deteminatives; thorough systematization and standardization of signs.
- **Revolution of Heliopolis** with the development of the pictographic script; writing of grammatical elements (Morenz 2007) around 2800/2750 BCE.
  - *Icon*:  (particle *jn*), graphic-phonetic fixation also of synsemantic elements of the language.

The development of the Egyptian script was in no way completed after these periods, but around 2700 BCE, the basics of the Egyptian writing system had been established and remained surprisingly stable for centuries and even millennia despite subsequent reforms.

Furthermore, smaller developments have to be accounted for already at the beginning of Egyptian writing throughout the decades and centuries of using the script that resulted in certain developmental waves. Contrary to these smaller waves, the aforementioned reforms and revolutions had a stronger impact on the changes affecting the system and were consciously implemented. Not every scribe who modified or invented a sign or spelling, or who worked on the writing system in any way may have understood himself as a reformer. In fact, a certain scribal liberty constitutively belonged to the Egyptian scribal system with its generally open inventory of signs.[5] The smaller changes in the history of writing, which should not be underestimated, however, provided the impetus for systematic reforms and even revolutions over and over again, especially when they achieved critical mass.

In terms of the development of the script, the borders between reforms, revolutions, and waves are, of course, fluent. The sociological question of how these reforms and revolutions were institutionalized in the Egyptian society cannot be answered with certainty due to the lack of data. "Masters of the scribes", that is scribes who were close to the king such as Hesi-re and Imhotep of the third dynasty most likely played an important role in the standardization of the script, although it is impossible to connect specific developments with them because of the nature of our data. At least we know in general that the

development of the writing system never constituted an automatic process but was always carried by concrete actors who had their own specific agency. The "human factor" should thus not be forgotten.

Despite the fact that the specific agents that were engaged in the graphic developments have to remain anonymous for us, we are nevertheless able to distinguish two ideal types in the sense of a sociology of knowledge: *speculators of knowledge* versus *rentiers of knowledge* (Burke 2001). The term *speculators of knowledge* points towards the high significance of coincidence in the developmental history and a conscious focus on novelties in the cultural evolution. The first revolution of Egyptian writing with the development of a pictographic script through the introduction of the rebus principle around 3300/3200 BCE can be associated with stimulations by *speculators of knowledge* and a high gain through coincidence, while the second revolution around 2800 BCE is better to be explained as a material and technological revolution through *rentiers of knowledge*. In addition, there is the effect of *phenomena of the third kind* as control mechanisms by the *invisible hand* (Keller 1994). Especially reforms and waves are primarily associated with persons of the type *rentiers of knowledge* and are explainable through a form of *path dependence* as well as the *phenomena of the third kind*. Understanding the medial development as a generally complex, technologically, intellectual, and socially determined phenomenon is only possible in the context of the culture as a whole.

The Egyptian Script and its Relation to the Visual Mode of Gestural Communication

In the debates regarding the origin of language from the Renaissance up into the nineteenth and even twentieth centuries, gestures and sign languages were seen as a possible universal language contrary to the diverse spoken languages.[6] Sign languages, however, like their spoken counterparts, are culturally specific and equally arbitrary, not simply authentic but discourse dependent at the same time.

Just like writing, gestures form a visual communication system, one that is hundred of thousands of years older than the former. Both types thus share a close family likeness as *visual languages*. This is especially true with regard to Egyptian writing, since phonetic and visual communication are particularly closely intertwined in the Egyptian hieroglyphic system.[7] The visual component of *face-to-face*-communication was, besides the overall pictorial character of the signs, transformed into the visual aspect of the script in particular with determinatives and logograms on a functional level. The iconic potential of the signs was particularly strong in these cases.[8]

From a historical point of view, gestures, as an evolutionary ancient *visual language*, play an astoundingly small role in the development of script in a narrow sense given the structural relationship of the two. Following A. Leroi-Gourhan's interpretation of palaeolithic pictorial art as a graphic outsourcing of rhythmic gestures, it is possible to also understand script as an extension of gestures and spoken language (Leroi-Gourhan 1964–65). The cultural technique of writing that innovated the direct connection between picture and sound, however, was only developed under the specific socio-economic, medial, and intellectual conditions of the fourth millennium BCE, during which we are

able to observe several steps in the phoneticization of the picture and the increasing auto-referentiality of the sign inventory.

Nevertheless, gestural signs were specifically composed at interfaces in the history of the Egyptian script in the context of important reforms. The development of gestures into hieroglyphs was determined by three basic graphical conditions:

1. Gestures constitute a complex sequence of movements and, at the same time, have a characteristic form in which the symbolic motion culminates. Such a *peak-structure* is shown by the hieroglyph cheering-man according to Adam Kendon, a scholar working on gestures. This hieroglyph represents the peak of the rhythmic act of jubilation with arms stretched up high.
2. A single form can imply several meanings. The hieroglyph , for example, has more than one meaning. It not only codifies the gesture of jubilation but also, in the sense of stretching out the body, the meaning "to be high". As a third meaning we can think of the act of lifting, which is known as a pose of the god of air Shu and the goddess of the sky Nut. Furthermore, as a fourth meaning, raised arms represent a traditional dance posture, which is already attested during the Naqada period. When the sign is used as determinative for the phonetic sequence *ḥ̌j* "to cheer", , it seems clear that the jubilation gesture is the meaning underlying this use.
3. We can determine basic forms of gestural hieroglyphs, such as the "speaker" (*sign-list* A 26) with his extended arm. At the same time, individual scribes had the possibility to vary the shape of the signs. The form of the speaking-semogram has several variants with regard to the position of the hand in the pyramid texts (, , , or). As in this case, the Egyptian hieroglyphic sign inventory as a whole exhibits a high degree of tolerance towards variations in an otherwise standardized writing system.

As a case study, let us now have a look at the oldest known Egyptian gestural hieroglyph. The sign constitutes a gesture-like symbol from a head-on perspective. So far, it is only attested in a single inscription, namely in the only fragmentarily preserved ceremonial palette from the late fourth millennium BCE depicting places.

The hieroglyphic sign (lower line) resembles the shape that we know from the first dynasty on. In order to explain the relationship between the sign forms and , we can start by positing the following considerations:

a. could represent an idiosyncratic sign from an old center of writing.
b. We could assume a simple change in the iconographic convention from to in the early third millennium BCE.
c. could reflect a gesture of a proto-Egyptian culture that was only in part integrated into Egyptian culture.
d. We might consider an intra-cultural change of gestures.

Because of the coincidence of transmission, it is not possible to choose between these different possibilities, in fact, it would be possible to consider even more.

We are, however, able to posit a well-founded hypothesis for the meaning of the form . From the Old Egyptian culture we know a scenario in which the transition from one

hand to the other plays an important role, namely in the counting with ten fingers (Egyptian *ṯnw m ḏbꜥ*).[9] In counting-out rhymes, the transition from one hand to the other was a special topic that was stressed within the text through a specific rhyming couplet (Sethe 1918). According to this, we can understand the hieroglyphic sign 𓂝 as a gesture of counting, which is preserved here in the form of a pictograph.

If we analyze the hieroglyph 𓂝 as a gesture of counting, it is likely that, as a next step, its reading should be *jp* "to count".[10] According to this we can expect a relationship between 𓂝 and the preliminary reading *jp* to *p* – the Egyptian place name *p* ("throne, seat") = Greek Buto – since other signs that appear on the circumvallations on the palette can be connected with the area of Buto as well (Morenz 2004, 138-154). Similarly as in the case of the hieroglyphic sign that stands for the consonant *m* (derived from *jm*), the initial weak consonant *j* in *jp* was not relevant for the reading of the sign. We can thus count 𓂝 as an early monoconsonantal sign that was already excluded from the hieroglyphic inventory by the fourth to early third millennium BCE. This development can be explained through various graphic and cultural factors. One reason for the substitution of 𓂝 could be that it can easily be confused with the shape of the hieroglyph 𓌳. The standardization of the script also had the aim of creating clearly identifiable and unambiguous sign forms, which could have been the reason that 𓂝 was no longer used in the fourth/early third millennium BCE.

These observations regarding the hieroglyph 𓂝, which is only attested once so far, allow us insights into the process of the development of the script together with the cultural work on the writing system. Uncertainties remain in individual cases, the general tendency, however, becomes clear.

The Question of Language Versus Languages: Multilingualism in the Nile Valley in the Fourth Millennium BCE and the Question of the Correlation Between Language – Culture – State(s):

In general, we need to consider the question of substrate languages in writing, standardization of writing, dialects, etc. If the written language acts as standard language, how close is it to the spoken language and how much does it function as a "Homeric dialect" (for Middle Egyptian see Eyre 1991)?

The issue of multilingualism in the Nile valley can be elucidated by looking at the case of place names, and similarly divine names and titles. We find quite a few toponyms that are clearly identifiable as being Egyptian etymologically, such as *3bw* (= [place of] Elephants = Greek Elephantine), while *3bḏw* (Abydos) does not have an obvious Egyptian etymology. The separation into *j3b-ḏw* suggested by G. Dreyer is not feasible since adjectives generally follow the noun they modify in Egyptian and do not precede it. A solution and etymological connection are thus still extant. Furthermore, there are names with more or less plausible Semitic etymologies, such as *ꜥnp* (= Greek Mendes).

A specifically interesting case is that of layers of names in proto- and early-dynastic times found at Buto (Morenz 2009). The earliest in inscriptions attested case is that of the place

name *ḏbꜥ* (*.t*?) written with the heron-hieroglyph on the array of cities . This *ḏbꜥ* is the oldest graspable name of the area of Buto. If the heron was used as a phonetic rather than an ideographic sign, which is likely because we do not know of a connection between a heron and Buto besides this type of spelling, then the etymology of the term is to be considered uncertain. Perhaps, it might even reflect a non-Egyptian lexeme. From the perspective of the history of the language, we can call it *Old-Buto*. In addition, *p* and *dp*, which can be etymologized as Egyptian, are attested as place names of Buto. *P* seems to have been the later name of Buto, which was increasingly used from the I. Dynasty on. This lexeme has a clear Egyptian etymology and can be explained as "throne/seat". In this case we can speak of *New-Buto*. The use of older *ḏbꜥ*, however, was never completely abandoned.

Whatever is the matter in individual cases, the toponyms of the Nile valley indicate, as in Mesopotamia, that there existed a certain degree of multilingualism, which influenced the phoneticization of pictograms (for Mesopotamia see Selz 2000).

Standardization and Formalization

The use of the cultural technique of writing in an area of over 800 km from North to South and with several centers required a communicational community that shared certain rules and standards, namely the (sub-)elite of the literary and professional scribes. The tendency for standardization concerns the inventory, layout, shape of sign, spelling, etc. which will be elucidated in a case study in the following. At the same time, there existed a high tolerance towards variations in individual sign shapes, which, again, was based on certain traditions and rules. In fact, the existence of such standards in the context of communication beyond the individual is a general requirement for the possibility of the use of script in a society (Goodman 1976).

Signs such as the well-known hieroglyphs *kneeling man* () and *kneeling woman* () belong to the formally and functionally *obvious* or *natural* forms of the Egyptian hieroglyphic script. They express the culturally molded ideas of MAN and WOMAN in an easy pictorial form.

From a functional point of view,  and indicate in certain circumstances that the signs that precede them designate a male or female personal name, which is written purely phonographically with consonantal signs. In these cases, they function as determinatives. We read the personal names of about 100 men on a stele from Sinai (S 85, western side) in such a way. Each name has its own field. In some places of this onomastic list, the sign  is clearly indented at the edge. This layout stresses the status of the hieroglyph as oscillating between picture and script. In fact, the sign can almost be understood as a small image of the man in question (Fischer 1973). Both signs, and , can also have very different functions in the various texts and, for example, be used phonographically.

Self-evident as the signs or seem to be to a foreign observer – do these two simple forms truly go back to the origins of the Egyptian script? A phenomenon that can be

repeatedly observed in cultural histories, namely that the creation of a simple form often requires a longer cultural development, tells us to be cautious. Parting from the superfluous and casting off cultural baggage represent a difficult challenge, which, in the sense of path dependence, is often shunned. This assumption is also true for graphic forms and can be connected to observations from medial and intellectual history.

In the Nile valley, signs for men are already attested during the Abydos period of scriptural development, that is around 3200 BCE. When looking at the sign inventory, it is surprising that, although there are various depictions of human beings among the anthropomorphic signs known from the earliest written attestations, there are only signs of men. The fact that signs of women are lacking during this early phase of writing can be the result of the difficult to estimate coincidence of transmission, although this radical bias is striking. It is possible to at least posit a dominance of signs for men over those for women in the early hieroglyphic script. This observation regarding the early script corresponds with the fact that more signs for men than for women are attested in later periods of the script – that is, the variance (cf. Group *sign-list* A versus B) in the inventory of signs, and, at the same time, signs for men are used much more frequently than those of women in texts.

The following signs are attested on inscribed labels of goods in the archaic necropolis of Abydos during the time of the development of the script around 3200 BCE (Dreyer 1998):

a. Puncher (Uj 51)
b. Archer (Uj 45 – 48, perhaps also 49)
c. Pair of wrestlers (Uj 44, X 183).

These earliest known anthropomorphic hieroglyphs shall now be described in more detail.

The iconographic characteristics of the man depicted include the beard and penis satchel besides his punching-pose. The options for reading the sign PUNCHING MAN come from the lexical field of strength and power. A reading that is at least plausible in this context is *nḫt* "mighty one". This can be put into context by remembering other proto and early dynastic names of rulers such as Acha = "the warrior". These names express the potential of violence as a key element in the royal ideology of the Naqada period (Morenz 2005). The idea of such an aggressive royal presence also entered and influenced later pharaonic ideologies (Posener 1960). As shown by the discussed tablet, the roots of this gendered royal concept already lie in the fourth millennium BCE.

Some archaic labels exhibit a pair of wrestlers. Beard and penis satchel characterize the men here as well. The label represents a toponym that can likely be read as *qm3*.[11]

The archer likewise belongs to the war-like depictions of men in the early written attestations.

This hieroglyph most likely also notates a toponym. The "land of archers" designates Nubia, which borders on southern Egypt. The variations in the basic form of the sign are interesting from a historical perspective. They point to a high tolerance towards variations within the boundaries of the normative design of sign shapes. At the same time, the significant differences in form indicate the participation of several scribes in the early writing system.

These three types of MAN are the oldest attested anthropomorphic signs from Egypt. All signs for men within the proto-dynastic script are depicted as standing, including the

archer. This is remarkable especially since the archer is depicted as kneeling in its later hieroglyphic base form.

In particular, there is a general difference between these iconographically determined sign forms and the simple form . With regard to the early history of the script we can reasonably assume that the pictographic and essentially open basic types of MAN and WOMEN –  and  – developed out of these depictions of human beings that are iconically differentiated and based on concrete actions decades after the beginnings of the development of the script.

According to our attestations, the basic forms of the hieroglyph kneeling MAN (, *sign-list* A 1, and its specific variations) and kneeling WOMAN ((, *sign-list* B 1, and its specific variations) were created as a deliberate abstraction within the writing system at the time around 3000 BCE.[12] They can be understood as a pictographic realization of the cultural concept of man and woman that characterizes the undetermined character of a specific situation. They refer to MAN and WOMAN in a rather abstract manner. The pictorial depiction of this type of abstraction was a medially and intellectually innovative successful step into the extraction of new phenomenal spaces.

The Egyptian script was standardized, systematized, and refined with regard to certain writing conventions and its sign inventory in this Memphite reform of the script during the early third millennium BCE. After the first cautious attempts toward a phoneticization of pictures for the purpose of writing individual names, as in the discussed labels of goods from around 3200 BCE, the first true writing **system** of the world was created. The decidedly iconically open basic type MAN –  – was created out of the older group of signs depicting warrior-like men in warlike activities in the context of this complex process. The seemingly slightly later sign for woman  was subsequently created by analogy, and more specifically through structural correspondence, to the former.

Both MAN and WOMAN are depicted as kneeling in this hieroglyphic pair. This type of depiction is based on cultural conventions that we can specify in more detail. Kneeling represents the basic form of sitting in Egyptian society, while sitting on a chair had the specific connotation of "noble" (*špss*) (Kuhlmann 1977). This differentiation between kneeling and sitting and their cultural connotations influenced the finding and condensation of forms by the Egyptian scribes who created signs. The individual scribe who was using these signs, however, might not necessarily have thought about the iconic load of the sign forms that were transmitted to him, although the iconicity could be viewed afresh and, if there was interest and need, be updated.

Based on the preceding, I suggest the following thesis that can explain the development of the script and place it into its historic and intellectual context: The creation of the sign  occurred in a highly consequential reform of the Egyptian script, in which, according to older approaches, determinatives, as an essential group of signs, were systematically designed for the first time. At this time, specific categories of signs were developed systematically. This Memphite reform of the writing system, of course, only allows us to observe the use of the signs, since no proper conceptual terminology is preserved in the Nile valley itself. The general hieroglyphic signs for MAN and WOMAN were only created in this

context. We can date this significant reform of the writing system, in which the creation of the basic signs MAN and WOMAN were an important part, to the early third millennium BCE and further most likely connect it to the residence of Memphis as the center of high culture. Although we do not know the people involved by name, we can think of a group of royal scribes as the reformers of the writing system. Except by assuming a deliberate reform that was designed and executed by a relatively small circle of the literate, it is hardly possible to explain this enormous effort of the standardization of the writing system. A sign system was created through cultural work that formed the central inventory of the hieroglyphic script for three millennia.

With regard to their formal and semantic content, the basic forms  and  that were created back then can be compared with modern pictograms by Otl Aicher (1922–1991) and other graphic designers and philosophers of writing of the twentieth century CE. These do not offer simple pictures, but rather a radically schematized thought–picture that embodies a basic type in a highly abstract manner.

The graphic mastery is evident specifically in the reduction to the simple form of the figure. At the same time, the Egyptian hieroglyphs can be understood as a model based on a general cultural background.[13]

Signs such as the modern pictograms  were created to enable a clear as well as quick visual communication beyond language borders. Contrary to Aicher's pictographs, this is also true for the ISOTYPEs (I-nternational S-ystem O-f TY-pographic P-icture E-ducation) of Otto Neurath that were deliberately based on Egyptian hieroglyphs (Morenz 2009). The comparison of the Old Egyptian hieroglyphs  and  and the modern pictograms  makes clear how much these basic forms are dependent on culture on the one hand, but also express a quite similar basic concept on the other. At the same time, the creative achievement in designing the signs becomes evident that we can ascribe to Aicher and the duo Neurath/Arntz, as well as to the Egyptian scribe of the early third millennium BCE who remains anonymous to us. His product reveals the graphic mastermind of the early third millennium BCE.

According to these considerations, the sign  was created by an (to us) anonymous royal scribe in the early third millennium BCE and then understood as a basic sign of the hieroglyphic writing system during the Memphite reform. In fact, other hieroglyphs were subsequently derived from it. The group of signs depicting men and women was systematically provided with different gestures and attributes in the decades after 3000 BCE (Kahl 1994, 421-437). From this time on, the two significant and iconically open sign forms  and  functioned as anthropomorphic basic signs that could be varied iconographically according to interest, need, and talent of the respective scribe. I hope that this analysis has shown the semiotic (and also aesthetic) quality of the two basic signs  and .

Man is reflected as both the producer as well as the recipient of the sign, and as a significant source for signs in the hieroglyphs  and  (Posner 1994). Furthermore, it seems possible to discover certain patterns in the creation of hieroglyphic signs that are based on reformative turning points in the history of writing. We can detect a regular pattern of a "structuralist" creation of opposing sign pairs in the important Memphite reform of the

early third millennium BCE, in which the older and until then relatively unguardedly grown script that had developed already for about two hundred years was standardized. Models for this process constitute binary patterns in the perception of the world, such as night and day, sun and moon, agricultural land and desert, or strong versus weak animals. See Figure 3.1.

Even though we find similar oppositions in Mesopotamian cuneiform, such as male – female and low lands – mountains (Glassner 2000; Selz 2000), it is still unnecessary to assume a historical dependency of the two notation systems from each other. Rather, it is possible to assume that the model of a simple polarizing "structuralism" that is used in many cultures was a driving force behind the Egyptian inventory of signs.

The observable utilization of the human body as a source for signs is possibly to be regarded as being closely connected to the basic signs of MAN and WOMAN. A peculiar pattern is exhibited by signs that represent human body parts. These signs are predominantly attested since the I. Dynasty and, from the earliest attestations, we can deduct a systematic derivation of signs from head- to foot-signs in the early third millennium BCE. See Figure 3.2.

Human world:

versus	male – female
versus	male – female
versus	male – female[14]

Geography:

versus	Fertile land – desert; Egypt – foreign countries
versus	East and west (characteristic banner each)
versus	South and north (characteristic plant each)

Animals:

versus	Front – behind (each attested since I. Dyn.)[15]

Figure 3.1 Systematic pair production from the time of the Memphite reform of the writing system.

		Oldest attestations (Kahl 1994, 438)
	Head, side view	SNAKE
	Head, frontal view	Aha
	Lock of hair	II. Dyn.
	Eye	III. Dyn., although possibly older...[16]
	Foot	Djer

Figure 3.2 Utilization of the human body as source of signs in the Memphite reform of the writing system. Source: Kahl, Jochem. 1994.

This systematic manner of creating signs was a significant cognitive step in the developmental history of the script that indicates that a systematic process underlies this reform. The dismantlement of the human body into its elements was a central aspect of the development of signs during the Memphite reform of the script.

Abandoned Innovations, Removal of Cultural Residue, Breaks in Traditions

An interesting factor in the development of script is not only the visible progress but also abandoned traditions, paths that are no longer followed, etc. We know, for example, several signs from the oracle bone inscriptions that are no longer used in the Chinese writing tradition after this time, and this is analogically true for the early Egyptian script. Several hieroglyphs were no longer used after the early-dynastic period, such as the aforementioned arm-sign . This complex issue can be elucidated by a case study involving the orthographic variants of the name of the goddess Neith.

In early times, the goddess Neith was depicted through a pair of deathwatch beetles. During the subsequent period of Neith-symbolism, the original emblematic sign for the goddess consisting of a pair of deathwatch beetles was reinterpreted as bows and shields. In a further variant, only two crossed arrows are depicted. The development from cult symbol to graphic sign thus exhibits a certain degree of reinterpretation.

The bows and arrows indicate a warlike context. This semantic content fits into what we know of the goddess Neith, who has been compared to the Greek goddess Athena in intercultural comparisons of deities (el Sayed 1982). Based on this, we can deduce the meaning of the deathwatch beetle motive. It is well known that ancient Egyptians closely observed animals and their behavior and ascribed them with symbolic meaning (Evans 2010). It must therefore have been known that deathwatch beetles fed through wood, destroying the material. This strong destructive aspect is what is iconographically reinforced through the combination of the two bows in the pictographic sign. According to this, we can explain the occurrence of the two bows as a substitute for the actual deathwatch beetle that preserves the violent character but simplifies it in its graphic form at the same time. The typological series of developments of the Neith-sign did not simply happen in a straightforward manner throughout the centuries of the Egyptian development of the writing system, but rather with remarkable leaps forward and backward, in the sense that later periods sometimes returned to earlier sign shapes (see Hendrickx 1996).

Coda

Considering the depths of the history of script can reveal cultural and intellectual horizons and help understand the complex logic and winding paths exhibited by the development of writing systems. A perspective based on the medial and intellectual history transforms the Old Egyptian hieroglyphs into a magic mirror that reflects us and our world of symbols.

NOTES

1 In Mesopotamia, rebus writings are already known from tokens of the fourth millennium probably predating writing on tablets.
2 After the early dynastic period, this sign is no longer used in hieroglyphic writing.
3 The sign form of the bird's body is not clear because of both the small size and the bad state of preservation of the seal. From an iconographic point of view, the reading as *b3*-bird is not evident based on the later hieroglyphic sign, although both the context and parallels support this interpretation.
4 A grapho-phonetic symbologram differs from simple metaphors in that it exhibits a higher degree of complexity in the sign, a combination of phonetic and semantic aspects and a specifically high density in the sign.
5 Typologically opposed are alphabetic writing systems, whose sign inventories are at least relatively closed.
6 One of the last attempts to derive the hieroglyphic script from gestures that were so popular during the Renaissance and Baroque was undertaken by Jacques van Ginneken (1939).
7 In 1605, Francis Bacon included gestures among the natural signs that led to the Hieroglyphs. During these pre-Champollion times, Bacon considered the Hieroglyphs as purely iconic. His concept of gestures was strongly bound to time as well. The Chinese script, on the other hand, he considered as an example of the arbitrary choice of signs (Friedrich 2003, 89-116, 104-105).
8 In a way, Antoine Artaud is correct when he considers gestures as "living hieroglyphs" (1964, 58).
9 See Sethe (1918). It seems that the scenario of counting was specifically put into a visual representation in the bronze figurine of a priest (Müller 1989).
10 From the I. Dynasty on, the word is written with a monoconsonantal signs. Furthermore, all earlier attestations do not have a determinative.
11 These signs were almost completely eliminated from the common hieroglyphic inventory (Morenz 2004).
12 Traditionally, these signs are interpreted as generic forms, see e.g. Beaux (2008, 288-313; 290-296). This is correct for the history of writing from the early third millennium on, although it is remarkable that these basic types are not part of the hieroglyphic inventory from the very beginning but were established within the context of a systematization of the script.
13 In fact, the great graphic mind Otl Aicher is fascinated by Egyptian hieroglyphic writing, although the hieroglyphs should rather be seen as indirect possible models that influenced his design of pictograms than as direct ones.
14 This includes the attribution of the specific phonetic values *jt* and *mw.t* besides the basic values *f* and *nr* to these signs (Morenz 2008, 68).
15 These signs exhibit an abstraction of the lion's body in the form of a polar division with beginning and end point that leaves out the intermediate elements.
16 See Kahl (1994, 443-464) for the signs sign-list D 11–54.

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CHAPTER FOUR

The Emergence of Alphabetic Scripts[1]

Christopher Rollston

The Earliest Evidence for the Alphabet and its Iconic Models in Egyptian

Non-Alphabetic Writing (e.g., Mesopotamian Cuneiform and Egyptian Hieroglyphics) is first attested for the terminal chronological horizons of the fourth millennium BCE (see Woods 2010; Houston 2004), but the earliest evidence for the usage of an alphabetic writing system comes from the early- to mid-second millennium BCE. All alphabets derive from this original alphabet. An alphabet can be described in a succinct fashion as a writing system in which each letter (some scholars use the terms "sign," or "grapheme," instead "letter," and all are acceptable) is intended to signify a single phoneme (thus, if an alphabet has twenty-seven distinct letters, these are intended to represent twenty-seven distinct phonemes). A phoneme can be defined as the smallest, meaningful unit of sound. Note that within non-alphabetic writings systems, each sign that is part of the writing system normally represents multiple phonemes (e.g. those of an entire syllable, or those of an entire word). Also rather important to note is the fact that in non-alphabetic writing systems, there are large numbers of signs (normally, hundreds), but within alphabetic writing systems, the number of letters (i.e. "signs" or "graphemes") is comparatively small (e.g. Phoenician with twenty-two, Greek with twenty-four, etc.). Regarding terminology, the world's first alphabet is sometimes referred to in the literature as "Proto-Sinaitic," "Proto-Canaanite," "Canaanite," or "Early Alphabetic." Within this article, the term "Early Alphabetic" will normally be used. In addition, for a graphemic sign representing an alphabetic phoneme, the term "letter" will normally be used.

Research on Early Alphabetic began in earnest during the first two decades of the 20th century. Sir Flinders Petrie had discovered at the site of Serabit el-Khadem (southwest Sinai)

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Hieroglyphic inscriptions, the majority of which are from the Middle Kingdom and contain the names and titles of scores of Egyptian officials (for translations, see Gardiner, Peete, and Černy 1955, 77-216; see also Petrie 1906). However, he also discovered some inscriptions that he considered enigmatic. Initially these enigmatic inscriptions were thought to be a "local barbarism." But Petrie soon sensed that these inscriptions were alphabetic, stating that "it is a definite system" and "I am disposed to see in this one of the many alphabets which were used in the Mediterranean lands long before the fixed alphabet selected by the Phoenicians" (Petrie 1906, 129-32).

Gardiner was responsible for the publication of all these inscriptions and he soon became convinced that the script was indeed alphabetic, just as Petrie had surmised. Then, Gardiner rapidly began to make major strides forward in the decipherment of these inscriptions, based on his assumption that "the acrophonic principle" was operative (Gardiner 1916, 1–16). The acrophonic principle can be defined as a writing system in which each letter is (fairly) pictographic (i.e. depicting an object) and the name of the object begins with the sound which the letter was intended to represent. Thus, in Early Alphabetic, for example, the letter that depicted a house was intended not to signify a "house," but rather the "b sound" (as the Semitic word for house is *bayit*). Similarly, the letter that depicted a door was not intended to signify a "door," but rather the "d sound" (cf. Semitic *dalet* meaning "door"). Or again, the letter that depicted a human head was not intended to signify a "human head," but rather the "r sound" (cf. Semitic *rō'š* meaning "head"). It should be noted in this connection that Early Alphabetic letters represented consonants only, not vowels (i.e. Early Alphabetic writing did not have a mechanism for representing vowels, although later alphabetic writing systems such as Aramaic, Hebrew did develop some fledgling mechanisms for representing vowels, something that was later developed much more fully in ancient Greek). Also, it is important to note that during the course of the first few centuries, the letters of the alphabet gradually became more linear (while still retaining some of the early pictographic features).

As for Early Alphabetic, Gardiner (following Petrie's sense) argued that the intellectual soil that facilitated the invention was (certain aspects of) the ancient Egyptian writing system (Gardiner 1916, 1–16), including various Egyptian signs that represented single consonants. In addition, he became convinced that although these Early Alphabetic inscriptions "are not in Egyptian Hieroglyphic…many of the signs are obviously borrowed from that source" (Gardiner 1916, 14; see now especially Darnell et al., 2005, 75–85; Goldwasser 2006; Sass 1988; Hamilton 2006). Ultimately, based on the date of some of the Hieroglyphic inscriptions in the region of Serabit el-Khadem, as well as especially the morphological similarities between these Early Alphabetic signs and certain Hieroglyphic signs, Gardiner stated that he believed that it was tenable to assign these Early Alphabetic inscriptions to the latter portion of the Egyptian Twelfth Dynasty (i.e. ca. the early eighteenth century BCE), that is, the Middle Kingdom Period. Nevertheless, because of a relative dearth of data, he did not rule out a date some three centuries later than this (Gardiner 1916, 13; cf. also Gardiner, Peet, and Černy 1955, 32–41, with reference to three primary periods of Egyptian presence at Serabit el-Khadem, namely, the twelfth Dynasty, the eighteenth Dynasty, and the Ramesside Period). (See Figure 4.1)

Regarding the writers of these Early Alphabetic texts, Gardiner proposed that because they are written in a Semitic language, the authors were Semites (i.e. native speakers of a



Figure 4.1 Serabit el-Khadem Inscription.

Northwest Semitic language, not Egyptian). Moreover, Gardiner argued (because of the similarities between certain Hieroglyphic signs and certain Early Alphabetic letters), that these Semites were familiar with Egyptian Hieroglyphics (but, of course, even though the letters were modeled on Egyptian, they were not signifying Egyptian words or syllables, but rather Semitic consonants; for a sophisticated discussion, see Goldwasser 2006, 134–135, et passim). Furthermore, Gardiner believed that these Semites were connected in some fashion with the Egyptian turquoise mines in this region (Gardiner 1916, passim).

Ultimately, Gardiner was able to decipher accurately about one third of the Early Alphabetic letters, and this allowed him to read certain portions (Albright states that Gardiner had accurately decoded nine letters, Albright 1966, 2). Among the most convincing of Gardiner's readings were the words *tnt lbʿlt* 'gift for the lady,' with *bʿlt* being a reference to a Goddess, that is, the feminine form of the divine name "*Baʿal*." Some five decades after Gardiner's initial progress, W.F. Albright built on Gardiner's seminal work and published his own detailed analysis of these inscriptions, positing that he (i.e. Albright) could read twenty-three of the twenty-seven letters of these Early Alphabetic inscriptions. He also provided a succinct summary of subsequent expeditions to the region, including those of Harvard University (1927), the Harvard University-Catholic University expedition (1930–35), the Finnish Expedition (1929), and Georg Gerster's expedition to Wadi Naṣb (Albright 1966, 2–3). About Gardiner's work, Albright emphasized the critical importance of his conclusion that these inscriptions were alphabetic, that the letters were based on the acrophonic principle, and that the Goddess Baʿalat was indeed mentioned (cf. Hathor at Serabit el-Khadem). Albright dated these Early Alphabetic inscriptions later than Gardiner, namely, to ca. 1550–1450 BCE (Albright 1966, 6, 8, 12). However, it is also the case that Albright believed the actual invention of the alphabet to have occurred during the Egyptian Twelfth or Thirteenth Dynasties, that is, the eighteenth century BCE (Albright 1966, 15). Along those lines, Albright considered some Early Alphabetic inscriptions from the Levant to be older than the Serabit el-Khadem inscriptions, including especially the Gezer sherd, which he dated to ca. seventeenth century BCE (Albright 1966, 10).

During the succeeding decades of the twentieth century, after Albright's seminal work, Frank M. Cross made various fundamental contributions to the discussion of the history of the Early Alphabet (see Cross's collected writings, Cross 2003). Furthermore, P. K. McCarter's contributions have been particularly important (e.g. 1974; 1975; 1996)

as well. Moreover, both Benjamin Sass (1988; 1991) and Gordon Hamilton (2006; this publication by Hamilton was based on his Harvard dissertation, 1985) have contributed substantially to the discussion. Then, during the first years of the twenty-first century, two alphabetic inscriptions discovered at Wadi el-Hol (Egypt) were published (Darnell et al. 2005). The site of Wadi el-Hol is in the Qena Bend of the Nile, around 25 kilometers north and west of Luxor (i.e. far from the Sinai Peninsula). These two Early Alphabetic inscriptions had been discovered about a decade prior to publication (and one of them noticed many decades before that, but not recognized as significant). It has been argued that these can be dated to the same basic chronological horizon as the Early Alphabetic texts from Serabit el-Khadem, that is, the Middle Kingdom (i.e. Gardiner's date for the Early Alphabetic inscriptions from Serabit el-Khadem). Significantly, John Darnell (the Egyptologist who led the team working on the Wadi el-Hol Inscriptions) has argued that the Early Alphabetic inscriptions from Wadi el-Hol were modeled on Egyptian signs (as Gardiner had contended). Note the following citation in this regard: "What is most striking about the alphabetic texts from the Wadi el-Hol is how so many of the signs appear to reflect features and peculiarities best known from the paleographic, orthographic, and lapidary hieratic traditions of the early Middle Kingdom" (Darnell, et al. 2005, 86), hence Darnell's dating the invention of the alphabet to the early Middle Kingdom (with the Wadi el-Hol inscriptions themselves dating somewhat later in the Middle Kingdom). (See Figure 4.2).

About the content of the Early Alphabetic inscriptions from Wadi el-Hol, the authors of the *editio princeps* read (entirely reasonably and convincingly) *rb* "chief" at the beginning of Early Alphabetic Inscription 1 (reading sinistrograde, that is, from right-to-left) and the word *ʾl* "God" at the end of Early Alphabetic Inscription 2 (which is written columnar, that is vertically, and is to be read from top to bottom). However, they also state that as for the rest of these inscriptions: "No definite and compelling decipherment of these two inscriptions can yet be offered." Then they state that "As with any similarly brief, archaic, and highly opaque inscription, multiple and various readings can be forced, should one make sufficient effort" (Darnell et al. 2005, 85).

Also of substantial import in this connection is the content of some of the Egyptian inscriptions discovered in Wadi el-Hol, inscriptions found near the Early Alphabetic inscriptions. Here is Darnell's translation of the first four lines of one of these Hieroglyphic inscriptions: 'The General of the Asiatics, Bebi; his daughter Maatherankheni; the Royal



Figure 4.2 Wadi el-Hol Inscription.

Messenger Bebi; The Express Courier Hornebkhasutemsaf' (Darnell et al. 2005, 88, 102-103). Of course, "Asisatic" in Egyptian is a term used in Egyptian for Semites (especially those from the Levant). Darnell believes that the writers of the Early Alphabetic inscriptions of Wadi el-Hol were "not slaves," but "desert experts" who learned Egyptian from "military scribes" (Darnell et al. 2005, 90). Note that within a second Egyptian inscription from Wadi el-Hol are references to various officials, including a reference to "The Scribe of the storehouse of the mayor, Sawepwaut" (Darnell et al., 104). In the third Egyptian inscription, are these words: 'regnal year 26, third month of Shomu, under the majesty of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt Nimaatre, living forever. His true and trusted servant, who does all which he praises in the course of every day, the lector priest of Hut-sekhem, Kheperkare, possessor of veneration. His beloved son, Senuankh' (Darnell et al. 2005, 106). In terms of the nature, content, and caliber of the Egyptian inscriptions from Wadi el-Hol, Darnell states that "the rock inscriptions and depictions carved at the Wadi el-Hol range from hastily executed sketches to names of individuals and their relations, to elaborately carved literary texts. In addition to a site of intense economic activity, the Wadi el-Hol was also a center for religious observance, mostly centered on the worship of the Goddess Hathor, as evidenced by the 'spending the day on holiday' inscriptions, depictions of the Goddess in her bovine manifestation, and representations of musical celebrants" (Darnell et al., 2005, 74). Also useful to emphasize is that Darnell has noted that "the Egyptian inscriptions spatially closest to the Early Alphabetic inscriptions are the names of Egyptian scribes, apparently of Middle Kingdom date, but none of these are so close as to suggest some definite association of the inscriptions" and "the surface on which the Wadi el-Hol Early Alphabetic inscriptions were carved are otherwise uninscribed, flat facets of soft limestone" (Darnell et al. 2005, 75). In sum, Darnell's conclusions often dovetail with Gardiner's conclusions, including a date in the Egyptian Middle Kingdom, around the eighteenth century BCE.

Early Alphabetic inscriptions are also seemingly attested in Mesopotamia (assuming that the alphabetic inscriptions are ancient). To be precise, Stephanie Dalley has recently published a number of Akkadian tablets from the First Sealand Dynasty, and some brief, difficult Early Alphabetic inscriptions are present on the edge of four of these tablets (Dalley 2009, 15; plate 175 and drawings on plates 30, 50). In terms of date, Dalley stated that "the cuneiform King-lists place the First Sealand Dynasty between the Old Babylonian and the Kassite, and there seems no reason to contest that" (Dalley, personal communication; see also Dalley 2009, 1–17). Regarding the grammar and the logograms (etc.) of these tablets, Dalley stated that this makes it certain that this corpus of tablets "come from a period at the end of the Old Babylonian Dynasty." Thus, regarding an approximate absolute date of these tablets from the First Sealand Dynasty, Dalley has stated that a date of ca. 1500 BCE is the most convincing (the presence of certain known royal names is also part of the equation). The difficulty is that, as is the case with tens of thousands cuneiform tablets, these were not found on a scientific excavation, but rather on the antiquities market. Regarding the authenticity of the tablets, including the alphabetic inscriptions on four of them, Dalley has stated that she has "no doubt that these are all genuine" (personal communication). Ultimately, therefore, the presence of these alphabetic inscriptions on Mesopotamian tablets that arguably date to ca. 1500 BCE is important. Moreover, allowing at least some time between the invention of the alphabet

and its usage in Mesopotamia is also necessary. As for Early Alphabetic in Mesopotamia and Syria, it should be noted that Glenn M. Schwartz has argued (Schwartz 2010; *pace* Dalley 2009, 15) that the early non-cuneiform writing in an Early Bronze tomb at Umm el-Marra (Syria) should not be construed as Early Alphabetic

Before concluding this segment of this article, it is important to emphasize an area of continuing discussion and debate regarding the date of the invention of the alphabet and its earliest attestation. Namely, Benjamin Sass has been a strong proponent of a very low date for the invention of the alphabet (and thus for inscriptions such as those from Serabit el-Khadem and Wadi el-Hol). For example, he stated that he considers a "birth-date of the alphabet…around ± 1300 BCE" to be the least problematic chronological horizon. And he augments that statement a few lines later by stating that "the alphabet was born in the fourteenth or early thirteenth century (in Egypt, as noted), surfacing in the Levant shortly thereafter" (Sass 2004–2005, 157; see also Sass 2005, passim). This contrasts with his earlier view that the most convincing date for the Early Alphabetic inscriptions of Serabit el-Khadem was the Middle Egyptian Kingdom, namely, the eighteenth century BCE (Sass 1988, 135–144). Nevertheless, in fairness to Sass, it should be noted that even in his initial major publication on the subject (i.e. 1988), he did seriously consider dating these Early Alphabetic inscriptions much later than the eighteenth century BCE. In any case, as for Sass's attempt to lower the dates so dramatically for the Early Alphabetic inscriptions, it is useful to note that this is arguably part of a broader pattern in his writings during the past ten to fifteen years to lower the standard dates for the Early Byblian Phoenician inscriptions (e.g. Sass 2005, 2005, 49; response by Rollston 2008b).

In any case, as for the date of the Early Alphabetic inscriptions from Serabit el-Khadem and Wadi el-Hol, the most elegant and convincing date (based especially on things such as the palaeographic similarities between Middle Egyptian Hieroglyphic and Hieratic vis a vis the Early Alphabetic inscriptions from Serabit el-Khadem and Wadi el-Hol) is the chronological horizon of the eighteenth century BCE. Someone might attempt to push the data and argue for the seventeenth century BCE. This is tenable as well, but not quite as convincing. Moreover, of course, especially with the presence of Early Alphabetic inscriptions on tablets from Mesopotamia (which date, as discussed above, to the First Sealand Dynasty, ca. 1500 BCE), Sass's ultra-low date for the first Early Alphabetic inscriptions (i.e. those of Serabit el-Khadem and those of Wadi el-Hol) falters under the weight of the totality of the epigraphic evidence. In this regard, it is worth emphasizing that as for the date of the invention, Orly Goldwasser has argued for a date of ca. 1840 BCE (Goldwasser 2017, 142). Frank Moore Cross dated the invention of the alphabet to ca. eighteenth century BCE (Cross 1994, 57) and Joseph Naveh dated the invention of the alphabet to ca. 1700 BCE (Naveh 1987, 42). Moreover, it is also worth mentioning that it has recently been suggested (Haring 2015) that an ostracon of the Early New Kingdom (i.e. fifteenth century BCE) may indeed be an abecedary with the first few letters of the alphabet attested (in *halaḥam* order). Discussion of that possibility is of great importance (see Thomas Schneider 2018).

Finally, it should be emphasized that during recent years, scholarly treatments of Early Alphabetic have continued to appear, and are actually increasing in number. From my perspective, Orly Goldwasser's contributions are among the most important and authoritative (Goldwasser 2006; 2011; 2012a; 2012b; 2015; 2016; 2017). In addition, Aren

Wilson-Wright has made substantial progress in refining the readings of some of the most difficult of the Early Alphabetic inscriptions (e.g. Wilson-Wright 2013; 2016). Gordon Hamilton continues to work methodically on the corpus (e.g. Hamilton 2015), as do Benjamin Sass and Israel Finkelstein (e.g. Sass and Finkelstein 2016). Recently, a brief but useful volume was published that consists of a collection of articles on the subject of the origins of the alphabet (Rico and Attucci 2015).

The Broader Usage of Early Alphabetic in the Second Millennium

Naturally, once the first alphabetic writing system had been invented (i.e. Early Alphabetic), it had the potential to transform rapidly the technology of writing, displacing non-alphabetic writing systems such as those of Mesopotamia and Egypt. After all, alphabetic writing is not as complicated as non-alphabetic writing (e.g. the number of graphemes is just under thirty for Early Alphabetic). Therefore, someone might presuppose that the usage of alphabetic writing would have soon displaced non-alphabetic writing as the writing technology of choice. But it did not. In many respects, this is not surprising. After all, change takes time. Moreover, scribal education and scribal traditions in ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt were conservative traditions, preserving texts, copying again and again the great literature of the early period, and even at times attempting to retain the vocabulary and linguistic features of bygone eras. And the Levant was the periphery, not the center. Thus, the rulers of city-states in the Levant would primarily need to use Mesopotamian cuneiform (i.e. Akkadian) during the second millennium BCE for communication, diplomacy, and trade with the center, something the Amarna Letters demonstrate, of course (Moran 1992; Cohen and Westbrook 2000). Furthermore, in terms of reasons for the retention, for example, of non-alphabetic writing systems, it could be argued that the signs of Mesopotamian cuneiform are (at least in certain respects) more precise than the writing system for Early Alphabetic: after all, Mesopotamian cuneiform has the capacity to signify vowels, both long and short, something that Early Alphabetic did not do. Ultimately, as for the retention of non-alphabetic writing in the great centers of the ancient Near East (as well as in the periphery), the long usage of the prestige writing systems in ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt is fairly predictable. After all, hegemonic systems of all sorts have the capacity for usage, persistence, and preservation.

Thus, after the invention of the alphabet in the first half of the second millennium BCE, alphabetic writing did not rapidly displace non-alphabetic writing. There is a partial exception to this, but *only* partial: Ugaritic, a Northwest Semitic language which employs an alphabetic writing system. Much of the textual material written in the Ugaritic language is literary in nature, texts such as the great epics known as Aqhat, Kirta, and Ba'al. In addition, though, there are some epistolary texts (i.e. "letters"), as well as some incantations, some ritual texts, some legal texts (including treaty materials and some contracts), a number of administrative texts, some scientific texts (e.g. Hippiatric Prescriptions) and some abecedaries (for a very good sense of Ugaritic literature, see the peerless handbook

of Bordreuil and Pardee, 2009). Nevertheless, even at the site of Ugarit, it was Akkadian (written in the Mesopotamian cuneiform script) that was used most heavily, not the Ugaritic script and language. Along those lines, it is worth emphasizing the fact that the Ugaritic writing system is cuneiform in shape (rather than pictographic or linear). That is, the script of Ugaritic is "wedge-shaped" (on the script, see especially Ellison 2015 and the literature there). This is quite fascinating, as it was arguably an attempt to preserve the general appearance of Mesopotamian cuneiform (although the signs are entirely different, of course, as Mesopotamian cuneiform is non-alphabetic and the Ugaritic script is alphabetic), while also embracing the putative elegance and utilitarianism of the alphabetic writing system. Also of substantial importance is the fact that a number of the Ugaritic signs are attempting to have visual imprints that are similar to those of Early Alphabetic (e.g. *bet*, *gimel*, *ʿayin*, *šin*, etc.).

As for the geographic distribution of Ugaritic, almost all of the texts hail from Ugarit and Ras Ibn-Hani. But a handful of Ugaritic texts have been found at sites such as Kadesh, Cyprus (e.g., Hala Sultan Tekke), Lebanon (e.g., Kamid el-Loz and Sarepta), and Palestine (e.g., Ta'anach, Beth Shemesh). As for the Ugaritic alphabet itself, Pierre Bordreuil and Dennis Pardee have nicely summarized the situation in this fashion: "At present, three alphabetic systems are attested at Ugarit: (1) the "long" alphabet well attested by abecedaries [e.g. RS 12.063; RS 24.281; RS 94.2440]; (2) the "short"alphabet, very rarely attested and of uncertain composition (no abecedary has yet been discovered representing the "short" alphabet); (3) an alphabet of the South-Semitic type, presently attested at Ugarit by a single abecedary (RS 88.2215), arranged in South-Arabian order (i.e. {h, l, ḫ, m…} and with peculiar sign forms, very similar to an abecedary discovered in 1933 at Beth-Shemesh in Palestine (Bordreuil and Pardee 2009, 21). The "long" form of the Ugaritic alphabet originally consisted of twenty-seven letters, but with three additional letters were ultimately added (namely, 'i, 'u, and s+u). Note that these three additional letters are written last on the "long" abecedaries (i.e., RS 12.063; RS 24.281; RS 94.2440), demonstrating rather nicely, of course, the secondary status of those letters. In terms of the usage of the longer and shorter alphabets, Bordreuil and Pardee have convincingly and succinctly stated that "the long alphabet was clearly intended for writing Ugaritic because it is the means of graphic expression chosen for virtually all texts inscribed in that language" whereas "the 'short' alphabet shows fusion of graphemes on the Phoenician model…and the few texts in alphabetic cuneiform discovered beyond the borders of Ugarit seem to be written in variants of the short alphabet" (Bordreuil and Pardee 2009, 21; on the Ugaritic *halaḫam* abecedary, see especially Bordreuil and Pardee 2002).

In terms of the dates for the invention and usage of Ugaritic, Pardee and Bordreuil have stated that "Ugaritic is a one-period language, attested only for the last part of the Late Bronze Age, approximately 1300–1190 B.C." As for the date of the invention of the Ugaritic writing system, they have noted that "until recently, it was commonly believed that Ugaritic was invented in the fourteenth century," but that the best evidence now at hand suggests that the invention actually occurred "sometime during the first half of the thirteenth century." The evidence for this is that there is an "absence of any royal name in alphabetic cuneiform before Ammistamru, the son of Niqmepa, whose reign extended for three decades in the middle of the thirtenth century" and also the secure late thirteenth

and early twelfth century archaeological context for "a mythological fragment in alphabetic cuneiform in the archive of Urtenu,…bearing the signature of Ilimilku" (Bordreuil and Pardee, 2009, 19-20). The views of Bordreuil and Pardee are reflective of the consensus of the field.

It is also important to emphasize the usage of Early Alphabetic in the broader Levant during the second millennium BCE. That is, Ugaritic is not the only attested alphabetic writing system in the Levant during the second millennium BCE. For example, among the various Early Alphabetic inscriptions that have been discovered at a number of sites in the Levant, ranging from around the seveteenth century BCE through the tenth century BCE, are the following: the Beth Shemesh Ostracon (Driver 1954, 100-101, and plate 40; Naveh 1987, 35 with drawing), the Beth Shemesh Incised Potsherd (McCarter, Bunimovitz, and Lederman 2011), The Gezer Sherd (Taylor 1930 and plate 1), the Gezer Jar Signs (Seger 1983 and plates 1–4), Izbet Sarteh (Naveh 1978), the Ophel (Jerusalem) Incised Sherd (Mazar, Ben-Shlomo, and Aḥituv 2013; Hamilton 2015, with literature), Lachish Ewer (Cross 1954 and literature), the Lachish Dagger (Starkey 1937), the Lachish Bowl Inscripton (Ussishkin 1983, 155–157, and plate 40), the Megiddo Gold Ring (Guy 1938), the Qubur Walaydah Bowl (Cross 1980), the Qeiyafa Ostracon (Misgav, Garfinkel, and Ganor 2009; Rollston 2011), the Qeiyafa Ba'al Jar Inscription (Garfinkel, Golub, Misgav, and Ganor 2015), the Raddana Handle (Cross and Freedman 1971), the Shechem Plaque (Böhl 1938). (See Figures 4.3 and 4.4) of these inscriptions, the Lachish Dagger is among the most important of the Early Alphabetic inscriptions from the Levant. The archaeological context for this dagger is a tomb of the Middle Bronze Age (Starkey 1937; Sass 1988, 53–54; Goldwasser 2017, 140–142), arguably ca. the 17th century BCE. Cross suggested (in 1967) that this inscription (consisting of four letters) may not be Early Alphabetic (see conveniently Cross 2003, 317–329, esp. note 13), but the script seems indeed to be Early Alphabetic and the fact that the archaeological context is a secure tomb of the seventeenth century is also paramount (in terms of date). In addition, I would contend that it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Gezer Jar Signs (Seger 1983), incised before the firing of the pots, are Early Alphabetic and date to the Middle Bronze Age or early Late Bronze Age. Indeed, excavator Joseph Seger contends that these date to ca. the late seventeeth century BCE. Furthermore, the Megiddo Gold Ring must be part of the discussion as well. It hails from an excavated tomb, and according to P.L.O. Guy, the pottery found with the ring was MB II and LB II (Guy 1938, 173–177, and 68-72, plus Pl. 128: 15; and figure 177). The precise letters that are attested have been the subject of discussion, but the fact that this inscription is written in Early Alphabetic is certain. Thus, I cannot concur with the statement of Benjamin Sass that this inscription is a "pseudo-inscription" (Sass 1988, 101). I have collated this microscopically and consider it a nice, and readable, Early Alphabetic inscription.

In sum, Early Alphabetic is attested at its earliest stage in Egypt, but not long after that attestations occur in the Levant, with continuing occurrences during the course of time. And, of course, there are now attestations of Early Alphabetic in Mesopotamia as well. This reveals that although the alphabet did not displace the hegemonic Mesopotamian cuneiform and Egyptian in the second millennium BCE, it certainly was being used enough to make numerous cameos in the epigraphic record of the ancient Near East.

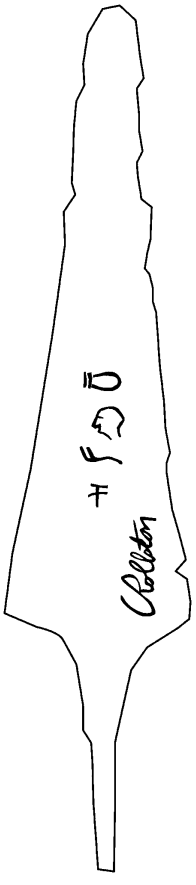


Figure 4.3 Bronze Dagger from Lachish.

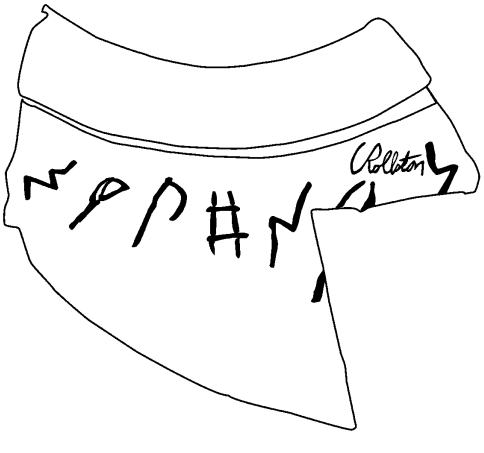


Figure 4.4 Incised Jerusalem Pithos.

The Inventors of the Alphabet: Elite Semites Familiar with the Egyptian Writing System

There is much general agreement about the inventors of the alphabet. Thus, most would agree that it seems convincing to understand the invention of the alphabet as something that occurred around the eighteenth century BCE. Moreover, since the language of these alphabetic texts is Semitic, it makes sense to contend that the inventors were Semitic. Furthermore, since many of the letters of the alphabet are reflective of Egyptian writing, it seems reasonable to contend that Semites who were familiar with Egyptian writing were the inventors. Of course, much of this has been the consensus for a century, beginning with the work of Petrie and Gardiner. But the evidence continues to mount, to the point that it is difficult to posit something different from this.

But there is room for some real discussion and debate regarding the social status and literacy levels of the inventors. Orly Goldwasser has contended that the "inventors of the alphabet could not read Egyptian, neither Hieroglyphic nor Hieratic" (2010; cf. also 2006; 2012a). That is, she contends that the inventors of the alphabet were "illiterate." She focuses heavily on the Serabit el-Hadem inscriptions. She states that: "the [Egyptian] turquoise expeditions to Serabit brought together high officials, scribes, priests, architects, physicians, magicians, scorpion charmers, interpreters, caravan leaders, donkey drivers, miners, builders, soldiers, and sailors" (Goldwasser 2010, 39), and also notes that "there were surely many more Canaanites at Serabit than are listed as such in the Hieroglyphic inscriptions at the site." Furthermore, she notes that "nowhere in the many inscriptions at the site is there a mention of slaves. Canaanites, yes; slaves, no" (Goldwasser 2010, 40). Among the high Canaanite officials were those from "the circle of one Khebeded," "the 'Brother of the Ruler of Retenu'" (Goldwasser 2010, 45), who wrote a Hieroglyphic inscription in the Serabit temple (Stela 92). Although the quality of the Hieroglyphs was poor, he was capable of writing Hieroglyphics. Moreover, she contends that "the Hieroglyphic pictograms in Stela 92 bear a remarkable resemblance to the signs in the Proto-Sinaitic inscriptions" (Goldwasser 2010, 46). She ultimately concludes that she believes "the inventors of the alphabet were illiterate – that is, they could not read Egyptian with its hundreds of Hieroglpyic signs" (Goldwasser 2010, 44).

Someone might contend that Goldwasser has actually made a good case for precisely the reverse, namely that they were indeed literate and hailed from elite circles. Part of the difficulty regarding the subject of the literacy is definitions. UNESCO has produced the following definition: "Literacy is the ability to read and write with understanding a simple statement related to one's daily life. It involves a continuum of reading and writing skills, and often includes also basic arithmetic skills (numeracy)" ("The Plurality of Literacy and Its Implications for Policies and Programmes."). Thus, based on Goldwasser's own statements, it can be said that at least some of the Canaanite(s) at Serabit el-Khadem meet the UNESCO definition of literacy. Conversely, as for the southern Levant during antiquity, I have proposed the following as a working definition of literacy: substantial facility in a writing system, this is, the ability to write and read, using and understanding a standard script, a standard orthography, a standard numeric system, conventional formatting and terminology, and with minimal errors (of composition or comprehension). But for those

who were capable of reading the most remedial texts with at least a modest level of comprehension and often the ability to pen some of the most common and simple words, the term semiliterate is proper (see also Rollston 2008a, 61–63). Thus, based on my stringent definition of literacy, it might be best to contend that the inventors of the alphabet were semi-literates. Nonetheless, the main point is that the inventors were not the Canaanites with the pickaxes in their hands, but rather they were supervisors of those with pickaxes (notice the presence of *rb* 'chief' in some of the Early Alphabetic inscriptions). And these supervisors were capable of understanding (at least to some degree), the Egyptian writing system and even to write texts in Hieroglyphics. They may not have had a thorough education in Egyptian, but they were able to write and read it.

The Transition from Early Alphabetic to Phoenician: The Center and the Periphery

During the final century or two of the second millennium BCE, alphabetic writing in the Levant ultimately began to dislodge the hegemony that non-alphabetic writing had long held. And it is most reasonable to contend that it was the Phoenicians who galvanized this movement. Here are the salient facts. During the terminal horizons of the second millennium BCE, three major developments occurred: the number of graphemes is fixed at twenty-two, the direction of writing is consistently sinistrograde, and the stance of the letters is substantially fixed (previously, alphabetic writing had as many as twenty-seven or twenty-eight letters; it could be written sinistrograde, dextrograde, boustrophedon, or columnar; and the stance exhibited enormous variation). The earliest inscriptions written in this "standardized script" are Phoenician. Thus, it makes good sense to call it "the Phoenician script." Along those lines, it is worth emphasizing that it is often said that "the Phoenicians invented the alphabet." Technically speaking, this is not the case. Rather, the Phoenicians can be credited with standardizing the alphabet (with regard to the number of letters, the direction of writing, and the stance of the letters). Striking is the fact that evidence can be found for this very thing among ancient Greek authors (see Rollston 2016, 270–276).

Some details about some of the earliest of the Phoenician inscriptions are important, so as to understand the stage. The earliest of the Phoenician inscriptions date to around the eleventh century or the very early tenth century BCE, with the Azarba'al Inscription a marvelous inscription written in the Phoenician script and the Phoenician language (Rollston 2010, 20). This inscription is incised into bronze and contains six lines of text, none of which is necessarily complete. It hails from, and was excavated at, the Phoenician port city of Byblos. Although the precise nature of this inscription is not normally considered certain, the content revolves around the inheritance of ancestral land (*nḥl*) and money (Phoenician *ksp*, 'silver'). Also hailing from Byblos of the tenth century are a series of additional Royal Inscriptions, all chiseled into stone. The Ahiram inscription is written on a large sarcophagus, and of course, it is a burial inscription, replete with the standard ancient caveats about not disturbing the dead. Here is my translation of this inscription: "The sarcophagus that 'Ethba'al son of Ahiram king of Byblos made for Ahiram, his father, when he placed him in his eternity. And if a king among kings, or a governor among governors, or a commander of an army should come to Byblos, and uncover this

sarcophagus, may the scepter of his rule be ripped away, may the throne of his kingdom be overturned, and may rest flee from Byblos. And as for him, may his royal records be effaced from before Byb[los].” Also hailing from Byblos is the Yehimilk Inscription. This is a dedicatory inscription, written in the Phoenician language and script, and can be read as follows: “The temple [literally: “house] that Yehimilk king of Byblos built. He restored all the fall temples. May Ba‘al-Shamen and Ba‘alat Byblos and the Assembly of the Holy Gods of Byblos lengthen the days of Yehimilk and his years over Byblos because the righteous and just king before the Holy Gods of Byblos is he.” This inscription has been chiseled into a dressed stone and the letters of this inscription are hung from a ceiling line (standard procedure for many inscriptions). The Abiba‘al and Eliba‘al Inscriptions are also from the tenth century, and are written in the Phoenician language and script. However, these two inscriptions are written on royal Egyptian statuary. Namely, the Abiba‘al Inscription is inscribed on a statute of Pharaoh Sheshonq I (r. ca. 945–924 BCE) and the Eliba‘al Inscription was inscribed on a bust of Pharaoh Osorkon I (r. ca. 924–889 BCE). This is a reflection, of course, of the very close relations that the Phoenicians had with the Egyptians throughout most of Phoenician history (for discussion and references, see Rollston 2016, 284–289). Although brief, the content of these inscriptions is of substantial importance, as cumulatively they reveal the names of a number of Byblian kings, aspects of the Phoenician religion (including the names of some of the Phoenician Gods), funerary practices, as well as aspects of trade and diplomacy. Most of the Phoenician inscriptions would have been written on papyrus and so did not survive the ravages of time, but these on stone (and others on pottery) are especially useful in understanding aspects of the social world of Phoenicia at the beginning of the first millennium BCE. Of course, the content and media (writing surface) of these inscriptions demonstrate that these inscriptions are elite, governmental inscriptions, not the product of the general populace. In any case, after the Phoenician standardization of the alphabet, the alphabet really took flight as it were, on land and sea.

But human history is never entirely neat and clean. Thus, it is important to note that the standardization of the Early Alphabetic script by the Phoenicians was not something that was immediately embraced everywhere. That is, evidence suggests that even after the Phoenician standardization of the alphabet, the Early Alphabetic script persisted for ca. 100 to 150 years, with the Early Alphabetic inscriptions from Tell es-Safi-Gath and Khirbet Qeiyafa among the most important evidence for this (for Safi, see Maeir, Wimmer, Aukerman, Demsky 2008; for Qeiyafa, see Rollston 2011 and literature cited there). Nevertheless, the Phoenician script did succeed in displacing entirely Early Alphabetic, and then ultimately, from this Phoenician script (Rollston 2006; Rollston 2010 19–46) came the Old Hebrew script (in the 9th century BCE) and the Old Aramaic script (in the eight century BCE).

Failed Attempts to Label Early Alphabetic Inscriptions as Hebrew or South Arabic

More than ninety years ago, H. Grimme wrote a volume entitled *Althebräische Inschriften vom Sinai* (1923) in which he argued that the inscriptions from Serabit el-Khadem were Hebrew. At that time, much less was known about the field of Comparative Semitics, and

the Ugaritic language had not yet been discovered. But Grimme's work was rapidly rejected (e.g. Albright 1966, 2), as the script of Early Alphabetic inscriptions is definitely not the Old Hebrew script (that was known even then), and the words that Grimme considered to be Hebrew were actually Common Semitic (that is, attested across the family of Semitic languages) and thus not distinctive lexemes of the ancient Hebrew language. Similarly, A. van den Branden (a scholar of South Semitic languages) argued that the inscriptions from Serabit el-Khadem were written in a South Semitic language, similar to that attested on various South Arabian monuments (van den Branden 1962). Of course, this proposal faltered on the same grounds as that of Grimme (Albright 1966, 3, note 10). Recently again, Douglas Petrovich (2017) has stumbled in the same fashion, that is, in not realizing that words he considers to be distinctively Hebrew are actually Common Semitic and thus attested across the Semitic languages, in (mis)reading into these texts biblical personal names, and in not understanding the vast differences between the Old Hebrew script and the script of Early Alphabetic.

NOTES

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PART II

ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN LANGUAGES

CHAPTER FIVE

Sumerian

Piotr Michalowski

Introduction[1]

Sumerian was the first identifiable written language of ancient Mesopotamia. Its earliest traces are probably to be found in the proto-cuneiform records from the city of Uruk and other southern Babylonian cities, going back as far as at least 3500 BCE. It is attested in writing as late as the first century CE. Sumerian is therefore documented over approximately three and a half millennia but was undoubtedly no longer an everyday vernacular from the nineteenth century on, even if opinions differ on the date of the death of the language (Woods 2006, with earlier literature). By the early second millennium BCE it was no longer spoken in the streets and palaces of Mesopotamia, where it was replaced by Akkadian, but continued to be used in schooling, scholarship, and literature in Babylonia, later in Assyria and throughout Western Asia.

The language label "Sumerian," and its similar equivalents in most modern languages (German *Sumerisch*, French *sumérienne*, Polish *sumeryjski*, etc.) ultimately derive from the Akkadian term *šumerû*, of unknown etymology. The Akkadian equivalent of "Sumerian language" was *lišān šumerim*, which was unrelated to *eme ĝir*, the native Sumerian term for the language. The latter has been explained as meaning "native tongue," although this interpretation is tentative.

It is generally assumed that Sumerian was originally spoken in the southern part of the area encompassed by the modern state of Iraq. Although there must have been other languages related to Sumerian in the past, there is at present no evidence of the existence of any related tongue. Therefore, Sumerian must be classified as an isolate, "a language that has no known relatives, that is, that has no demonstrable phylogenetic relationship with any other language" (Campbell 2017, 1). Even so, there have been numerous unsuccessful

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attempts to associate Sumerian with other languages or language families such as Hurrian, Hungarian, Turkish, Chinese, Tibetan, Uralic, or Na-Dene-Caucasian. Some of these efforts have been motivated by nationalistic inspirations and all have been plagued by methodological inadequacies (Michalowski 2017, 24).

Sumerian Textual Evidence

The earliest Mesopotamian texts were administrative accounts and educational/scholastic word lists. There are disagreements about the levels of language encoding, including the very identity of any underlying language, in the fourth millennium tablets that have been labeled as proto-cuneiform, but by the time of the ca. 2900 BCE Early Dynastic I/II ("Archaic") texts from Ur, Sumerian lexical and morphological elements are clearly identifiable in writing. This has been interpreted by some as evidence for a relatively late appearance of Sumerian speakers in southern Mesopotamia, but others would argue that rare phonetic complements and some rebus writings in the proto-cuneiform Uruk texts testify to the presence of Sumerian already in the fourth millennium. Likewise, the fact that no Sumerian personal names can be identified among the Uruk period documents may be explained by the fact that the names are mostly those of slaves or heavily indentured individuals, who may have been prisoners of war and therefore may have carried foreign names.

The aforementioned texts from Ur as well as some land sales and other documents indicate that economic activity was recorded in Sumerian during Early Dynastic I/II times. Literary texts, exclusively focused on mythological themes, appeared ca. 2575 BCE, a time usually designated as Early Dynastic IIIa, although there is fragmentary, possibly inconclusive evidence of earlier attempts at writing imaginative compositions. Contemporary economic and legal texts are informative; dedicatory inscriptions and letters make their appearance somewhat later in the third millennium. By now, similar Sumerian poems and word lists were used for scholarly and educational purposes throughout southern and central Babylonia, well attested in cities such as Shuruppak, Adab, Uruk, Isin, Girsu, and Nippur. Some of these scholastic texts were also used further to the north, in places such as Kish, but there are good reasons to think that the word lists, at least, were adapted in the north for local purposes and pronounced aloud in a version of the local Semitic vernacular rather than in Sumerian (Veldhuis 2004). Some of these compositions were transmitted from there to various Syrian centers such as Mari and Ebla, while other schooling texts made it there directly from the southern Babylonia.

The textual information from the next century and a quarter, ca. 2475–2325 BCE (Early Dynastic IIIb), has a somewhat different distribution. One of the best-known archives of cuneiform tablets from this time is from Syrian Ebla. The locally composed texts were in East Semitic Eblaite (often classified as a form of Akkadian), albeit inscribed in Mesopotamian cuneiform, including the first known bilingual word lists (Sumerian-Eblaite), but there were also literary and lexical direct and indirect imports from Mesopotamia written in Sumerian. Smaller text collections of administrative documents of various origin have also been recovered, most prominently from cities such as Girsu, Zabalam, and Isin. Girsu has revealed an important series of narrative historical inscriptions that span almost half a

millennium. The most abundant evidence for social and economic practice of the time is found in the numerous tablets from the city of Adab published in recent years.

Around 2324 BCE, a northern Babylonian war lord who called himself Sargon defeated the leader of the largest southern polity and managed to unite most of southern and central Babylonia under his own rule. He and his successors, reigning in the city of Akkade, unlocated at present but probably to be found somewhere on the Tigris river north of modern Baghdad, elevated the Semitic dialect of their own home (known as Sargonic or Old Akkadian) to official language status for certain purposes within much of the territory ruled by Akkade. Under the Sargonic kings, northern Babylonian communities used Akkadian in writing, but southern populations retained Sumerian for local accounting and as a prestige language for communication with the Crown (Foster 1982). Very little literature from this period is known to us today, leaving us much in the dark concerning schooling and scribal education. Only scraps of Akkadian literary texts have survived, but later traditions ascribed the composition of several Sumerian poems to Sargon's daughter Enheduana, high priestess of the moon god in the city of Ur.

The half century or more following the collapse of Akkade is poorly documented. The relatively small number of texts that have been recovered, mostly from the Lagash area, provides further evidence for the use of Sumerian in administration, schooling, scholarship, literature and for royal display.

Sometime close to 2110 BCE a certain Ur-Namma once again unified most of Babylonia. His activities, and those of his four successors (the Third Dynasty of Ur, ca. 2110–2003 BCE) can be reconstructed from close to 100,000 published precisely dated administrative texts, with many more either still in the ground or unpublished. The officials of this dynasty recorded their work in Sumerian, but small numbers of Akkadian texts from peripheral sites suggest that our large sample is skewed by chance of discovery and that Sumerian was not the sole official language of the time, even if it was imposed as the prestige written idiom. Officials and private teachers continued the work that began earlier in Lagash, reforming some writing standards and effecting drastic changes in the literary texts used in schooling. Almost all the Early Dynastic literary legacy was discarded and new texts, many of them honoring contemporary rulers, were composed, although most of these are known only from later copies when the Ur III hymns, epics, literary debates and other compositions were adapted as part of the main curriculum used in scribal education.

Sumerian retained its status as an official language in the south for over a century after the breakup of the Ur III polity ca. 2000 BCE, while in the north Akkadian dialects began to take over in writing. The last documented Sumerian archival letter dates from the time of Lipit-Ishtar of Isin (ca. 1873–1865 BCE), and by the middle of the nineteenth century the Sumerian language was no longer used for administrative and accounting purposes in most of Babylonia but seems to have survived in the city of Nippur and its vicinity. Letters, wills, and other everyday texts were now mostly written in Akkadian; Sumerian stock phrases were often employed in legal and administrative documents, undoubtedly read aloud in the Akkadian vernacular even when whole texts were written with standardized Sumerian formulae.

Schooling, however, was primarily focused on the old prestige language albeit embedded in a bilingual pedagogical environment. Indeed, this is the period that has bequeathed

us the largest amount of Sumerian literary compositions. The educational practices of central and southern cities such as Nippur, Isin, Larsa, Uruk, and Ur are well known. Some of the same materials were used in in the north in Sippar, Babylon, Kish and elsewhere, alongside very different teaching resources, some written in Akkadian. The curriculum consisted of the study of lexical lists, proverbs, and a few easy royal hymns in the early stages, after which the student graduated to the copying of a broad range of compositions, including royal and divine hymns, epics, laments, epistolary texts, as well as idealized debates, and small numbers of legal, historical, and historiographic texts. The evidence for schooling consists almost exclusively of the aleatoricaly preserved remains of student exercises with some archaeological vestiges of the rooms in which education was pursued, but there are indications that daily writing from memory was accompanied by philological analysis in the broadest sense and that much of this was bilingual, or perhaps better interlingual, involving extensive Akkadian commentary and translation.

Liturgical and magical texts were rarely learned in such environments; these were studied by specialist practitioners and taught orally from generation to generation by fathers or mentors and only committed to writing during apprenticeship and in preparation for ritual practice. There were also scholars, priests and educated elites who collected tablets and sometimes taught in less formalized settings, using different teaching materials. Although there is no direct evidence for the process, many signs point to a major intellectual effort to redact and restructure the received literary and lexical pedagogical compositions and to conventionalize the morphology and writing conventions of a dead language into a new one, Old Babylonian Literary Sumerian (OBLS). The time and place of this undertaking is unknown, but it was probably an evolving process that began in the nineteenth century BCE in Nippur but may have also involved philologists in other cities as well.

The results of these endeavors were subject further refined over the next few centuries and were subject to local variation. For much of this time Nippur was ruled by the dynasty centered in nearby Isin. New royal poetry celebrating the Isin kings was created on the model of Ur III antecedents, conforming to the claims of political and ideological continuity between the two dynasties. A different approach to Sumerian philology was taken by specialists working for the rival dynasty that ruled from the southern city of Larsa. The poetry composed to honor its monarchs was characterized by certain changes in Sumerian morphology and syntax, but differed substantially from older compositions in word selection, phraseology and choice of poetic diction (Brisch 2007, 91–119).

In the later phase of the Old Babylonian period some scribes, teachers and scholars began to explore new abstruse approaches to Sumerian, creating new texts that explored the language through the prism of the word lists and related texts, filtered through translation into and from Akkadian, and often resorting to rare words, expressions and novel recondite grammatical formulations, exploiting various properties of language such as metaphor, metonymy, or homophony, often in an interlingual context. Sometimes, such texts were inscribed with archaizing sign forms. George (2009, 106–111), who has provided the best description and interpretation of this phenomenon, refers to this as Academic Sumerian.

Little is known about the use of Sumerian in the centuries directly following the fall of the kingdom of Babylon ca. 1595 BCE, in what are now called Middle Babylonian times.

Table 5.1 Chronological chart.

3500–3000	Uruk IV/III period
2900–2576	Early Dynastic I/II
2575–2325	Early Dynastic III
2324–2142	Old Akkadian period
2110–2003	Ur III period
2002–1595	Old Babylonian period
1595–ca. 1000	Middle Babylonian Period

Akkadian was now widely used for written communication throughout the Near East, from Iran to Anatolia, the Levant, and even Egypt. Some selected Sumerian texts were transmitted to these areas and were used in the study of cuneiform, but by the end of the second millennium many of the Old Babylonian compositions were discarded, not to be read again until modern times, although a small number survived, and a handful of new Sumerian texts were composed, often continuing the methods and ideology of late Old Babylonian Literary Sumerian. The process of attrition was a gradual one but difficult to trace in Mesopotamia proper, although recently published texts from mid-second millennium Babylon shed some new light on such matters (Bartelmus 2016). By now almost all Sumerian texts were provided with Akkadian translations and the bilingual formats remained the norm in Babylonia and Assyria for the rest of the history of the cuneiform script. Akkadian became the major written language (even after the vernacular eventually gave way to Aramaic) and Sumerian was studied in educational settings and utilized in ritual and liturgical contexts. While incantations were formulated in standard Sumerian, much of the liturgy continued to be couched in Emesal (see below). First millennium rituals were transmitted in standardized editions although diverse redactions circulated in different scribal centers. In ritual practice the incantations and laments were recited or sung in Sumerian (unless formulated in Akkadian), but in written form they were most often accompanied by translations. The older language was also occasionally used in Babylonian building inscriptions from the late second and early first millennia.

Sumerian prayers, laments, and incantations were studied, edited, and reedited and new texts continued to be composed even after the conquest of Babylonia by Alexander of Macedon in 331 BCE. The last remains of Sumerian writing can be dated to the first century CE although it is possible that the use of the language survived in liturgy in places such as Harran and Edessa for centuries more. See Table 5.1.

Language Contact

There can be little doubt that the formative processes of incipient Sumerian literacy evolved at a time when the cities of southern Mesopotamia were multilingual places. As a result, during the fourth and early third millennium Sumerian acquired numerous loan words from diverse early Semitic languages and dialects (Civil 2007). The precise identities of these Semitic vernaculars are hard to pin down, but most of them may have been quite different from the Akkadian that eventually became the dominant language in

Babylonia. Indeed, while many have insisted that Sumerian and Akkadian coexisted for some time in various shades of bilingual contact, it is also possible that such sociolinguistic situations were less consequential and of shorter duration than often assumed and that the Semitic imprints on Sumerian came from languages other than Akkadian proper.

In addition to encountering speakers of various Semitic vernaculars, the early inhabitants of Mesopotamia were in contact with peoples who used a broad array of languages, including isolates such as Elamite and other unidentified tongues in the area currently occupied by the state of Iran and even further east. The interaction between Mesopotamians and foreigners took place in many different situations: people moved in both directions, visiting, often for years, and even settling permanently throughout Western Asia, traveling overland and via the Persian Gulf from and into the Indian Ocean involving places east, as far as Baluchistan, Kerman, Makran and beyond towards the Indus Valley. The sociolinguistic consequences of these interactions are presently unknown. Earlier attempts at recovering pre-Sumerian substrate languages from southern Mesopotamia have not been successful (Rubio 1999).

Varieties of Sumerian

For a language that is documented over such a long time-span, written Sumerian shows relatively little synchronic or diachronic variation. To be sure, in certain times and places there were local idiosyncrasies such as the use of a unique passive marker or regressive vowel harmony in verbal prefixes, but it is not always easy to discern the difference between local language practices and scribal conventions. The written standardized language conventions were used regardless of geographical and local variations in vernacular usage at the time when Sumerian was still widely spoken.

One such variety, however, denoted in Sumerian as **eme sal**, "fine/refined/delicate language (ES)," differed considerably from the standard lexical and phonological norms and in its socio-linguistic usage (Schretter 1990). Most of the differences were phonological, e.g. OBLS /d/ = ES /z/ (OBLS **udu** ~ ES **eze**, "sheep"), or OBLS /z/ = ES /š/ (OBLS **zi** ~ ES **ši**, "breath, life"), but some words appear to be have been either reduced or expanded versions of OBLS counterparts; e.g. OBLS **egar** ~ ES **ba-ar**, "wall," or OBLS **en** ~ ES **umun**, "lord, king." A small number of words were simply different, e.g. OBLS **gu-za** ~ ES **aš-te**, "chair."

There is currently no direct evidence for the use of ES before the Ur III period. The use of ES was highly restricted: it is documented almost exclusively in the speech or song of mortal as well as divine women in literary texts (but not in documents) and in the liturgical songs that belonged to the repertoire of a specific type of lamentation priest (Sum. **gala** = Akk. *kalû*). It should be observed, however, that there are many prose passages in which women or goddesses pronounce in standard Sumerian, but they expressed themselves in ES in highly emotive speech passages and in song.

The origins of this form of emotive language are untraceable, but Cooper (2006) has made a strong argument linking women to funeral lamentation: this function was eventually appropriated by the mostly male **gala**, suggesting that long before the written documentation of ES, there may have been a Sumerian women's singing/chanting convention

that became obsolete, but was preserved in the lamentations of the **gala**. Because the ES laments were used in daily and periodic religious rituals, ES had an oral presence that long survived the death of vernacular Sumerian, transmitted in oral form from father to son for generations by ritual specialists as late as the first centuries of the common era.

Sketch of Sumerian Grammar

The following synopsis of the main features of Sumerian language is of necessity incomplete and somewhat idiosyncratic. While there are areas of general agreement concerning certain areas of the grammar, there remain strong differences between scholars about various issues, particularly concerning verbal morphology.

The earliest reliable comprehensive picture of Sumerian was presented by Poebel (1923). Many contributed to the study of the language since then, leading to the highly influential work of Adam Falkenstein, recapitulated in his 1959 sketch. His contributions, as well as the next phase of research on the topic were summarized and systematized by Thomsen (1984), who also took into account elements from different approaches to the topic, most notably those of Jacobsen (e.g. 1960). For more recent opinions on the matter, the reader should consult the many shorter studies listed in the bibliography by Peust (2017), the grammatical works of Attinger (1993), Edzard (2003), Foxvog (2014), Zólyomi (2016), as well as the shorter sketches/discussions by Rubio (2007), Attinger (2007) and Michalowski (2008, in press). The present chapter summarizes Michalowski (in press and forthcoming).

Typological Features of Sumerian

The basic constituent order of Sumerian was Subject-(Indirect Object)-Object-Verb, i.e. S(IO)OV. Both heads and dependents were marked. Bound morphs were primarily suffixed on nominal phrases; verbs had both prefixes and suffixes, with a predominance of prefixes (some consider many Sumerian affixes to be clitics). Possessors were marked and succeeded the unmarked head nouns in possessive (genitival) constructions; adjectives followed nouns and subordinate clauses preceded main ones. There was no overt marking of definite/indefinite qualities. Free pronouns were used only for focus or special accentuation; hence Sumerian can be described as a pro-drop (pronoun drop) language. Both word formation and morphology were agglutinative and highly synthetic, although the apparently consistent agglutination might be an illusion imposed by the writing system, in certain periods at least, but which may also have fed back into the understanding of the language when it was no longer spoken.

The main participants of an action were marked by means of a system that formally recognized agents of transitive clauses as different from transitive patients and intransitive subjects. The former was marked by the ergative case, the latter by the absolutive. Sumerian had various alignment splits: while nominal marking was fully ergative, free personal pronouns, verbal imperatives and cohortatives as well as certain participial constructions marked transitive and intransitive subjects, i.e. they did not conform to ergative alignment

(Michalowski 1980). Independent of nominal marking, primary clause participants were indexed on verbs using a split determined by aspect: ergative in the perfective but nominative-accusative-like in the imperfective.

The language was head final; subordinate and relative clauses appeared to the left of the main clause. The rich verbal morphology of Sumerian encoded much syntactic information, but the morphological coding of relationships between clauses has not been adequately studied (for some basic information, see below). Sentences were most often expressed in the third person, but this is obviously a function of the pragmatics of written Sumerian:

lugal-e *e$_2$* *mu-un-du$_3$*
lugal.e *e.0* *mu.n.du.0*
king-ERG temple-ABS PREF-ERG.3SG-build-ABS.3SG
"The king built the temple."

Movement left for topicalization, focus, or semantic prominence could alter the order of constituents.

Sumerian Phonology

It is obvious that the reconstruction of the sound system of a long-dead language with no known relatives is an arduous task, hindered by the manner in which the writing system underrepresented phonology and the lack of proper analysis informed by linguistic phonological theory. Some, including this writer, would argue that this is a futile endeavor. Nevertheless, vague imprecise approximations of the sound repertoire can be gleaned from the written remains of Sumerian, even if much of them were filtered through other languages, primarily Akkadian. Indeed, from the beginnings of the second millennium on, if not some time earlier, the written forms of Sumerian were probably read aloud in a manner very similar to that of contemporary Akkadian, or, in areas outside of Mesopotamia proper, sounding very much like Hurrian, Hittite, Ugaritic, Aramaic, or even like Ancient Egyptian.

Vowels

The vowels of Old Babylonian Literary Sumerian (OBLS) probably corresponded to those found in Akkadian; see Table 5.2. For earlier periods, the situation is somewhat complicated.

Table 5.2 Sumerian Four-Vowel Reconstruction.

	Front	*Central*	*Back*
High	*i*		*u*
Mid		*e*	
Low		*a*	

Several scholars have proposed reconstructions of a larger vowel inventory in Sumerian, most prominently Poebel (1931, six vowels), Keetman (2005, seven vowels) and E. Smith (2007, seven vowels). The writing system, however, only directly distinguished between

the vowels diagramed above. Vowel length was not phonemic, although some, e.g. Edzard (2003, 14) and followers, would disagree. There is no evidence for the existence of diphthongs. Differing forms of regressive vowel harmony were notated in writing at various times (Attinger 2007, 11–14).

Consonants

The consonantal repertoire of Sumerian is even more difficult to determine. The following Table 5.3 represents a probable reconstruction of the OBLS eighteenth century BCE inventory as represented in writing by native speakers of Akkadian.

Table 5.3 Reconstructed Sumerian consonantal inventory.

		labial	dental/alveolar alveolar	palatal	velar	uvular
stop						
voiceless		p	t		k	
	voiced	b	d		g	
fricative						
voiceless			s	š	ḫ(ʔ)	
	voiced		z			r
	voiceless aspirated		ř(ʔ)			
resonant nasal	approximant		l			
nasal		m	n		ĝ(ŋ) (ʔ)	

Except for the lack of emphatics, and the presence of a few additional phonemes (/ĝ/ and the problematical /ř/), this looks very much like the consonantal repertoire of contemporary Akkadian (see Table 7.3 in chapter 7). This kind of reconstruction may not apply for earlier phases of Sumerian. Thus, for example, Jagersma (2010, 33) offers a somewhat different reconstruction of late third millennium consonantal repertoire, reproduced in Table 5.4 with his IPA notation, with the traditional notations in square brackets and phonemes that are usually not represented in modern transliterations in parentheses:

Table 5.4 Hypothetical mid/late third millennium Sumerian consonantal inventory suggested by Jagersma (201, 33).

		labial	dental	palatal	velar	glottal
stop						
	voiceless	p[b]	t[d]		k[g]	(ʾ)
	voiceless aspirated	p^h[p]	t^h[t]		k^h[k]	
spirant						
	voiceless asp fricative		s[s]	ʃ[š]	x(ḫ)	(h)
	voiceless affricate		ts[z]			
	voiceless asp affricate		ts^h[ř]			
resonant nasal		m[m]	n[n]		ŋʾ(ĝ)	
lateralnasal lateral			l[l]			
nasal tap			r[r]			
semivowel semivowel				(j)		

The evidence for the existence of the semivowel /j/ and the glottal stop is debatable, as is the argument for both a velar and glottal fricative (this author considers them as derived, i.e. non-phonemic). The phonemic identity of the nasal that is traditionally represented by Sumerologists as /ĝ/ is difficult to pin down, but it may very well have been /ŋ/.

Sumerian Morphology

Nominal Morphology

The Sumerian noun phrase consisted of a base and a series of affixes, predominantly suffixes. Nouns were marked for two genders, nine cases and two numbers.

Nouns could be linked to other nouns in possessive relationship, modified by adjectives and/or numerals and pronouns and marked for case. Possessive relationships (genitive), pronouns, some plurals and case marking were expressed by suffixed grammatical morphemes that followed one another in a set sequence in a noun phrase. Note that the genitive *–ak*, which marked relationship within a phrase, occupied a different slot than the case affixes, which marked relationships within a clause; thus, genitives could be followed by other markers, including case, as for example in:

**dumu tur*		*lugal ĝal ĝal*	*kalam-ma-ka-ke$_4$-ne-ra*
dumu tur		*lugal ĝal~ĝal*	*kalam.ak.ak.ene.ra*
son	young	king great	homeland-GEN-GEN-PL-DAT

"for the young sons of the great kings of the homeland"

Thus, the structure of the noun phrase was

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Noun	**Adjective/Number**	**Noun-**	**Genitive-**	**Pronouns-**	**Number-**	**Case**

In the artificial example above the first noun is followed by an adjective; the possessed second noun is likewise followed by an adjective this time reduplicated to mark plurality of the noun, followed by a third noun, like wised possessed, by two genitive markers, by the plural morph *–ene* that referenced "sons," and finally by the dative case marker *–ra*. The pronominal position (6) is empty here to avoid total absurdity.

In practice, the final consonant of the genitive was dropped in word final position and only surfaced when followed by a vowel. Thus, *lugal kalam-ma* (*lugal kalam.ak.0*) "king of the homeland" (absolutive), but *lugal kalam-ma-ke$_4$* (*lugal kalam.ak.e*) when the king was the agent, marked by the ergative *–e* following the genitive *–ak*.

As is well illustrated by this example, the affixes were stung in a specific order in the noun phrase and therefore were often not formally attached to nouns. This phenomenon has been discussed in the linguistic literature under the banner of double case marking, *Suffixaufnahme* or case displacement. Zólyomi (1996, 34–36) and Jagersma (2010, 78) have argued that Sumerian case endings as well as plural markers and bound possessive pronouns were clitics rather than affixes, but this remains an open question (Michalowski, in press).

Gender

Sumerian had two genders, conventionally designated as animate and inanimate. Animates consisted of humans and divinities; everything else was inanimate, although in literature personalized inanimates, such animals could formally be assigned to the animate class in specific contexts. Gender was not marked on nouns and was only surfaced in case assignment, pronouns and argument indexing on verbs.

Number

Sumerian had two numbers, singular and plural. Only animates or generic terms that applied to animates such as professional names were directly marked for plurality. Ergative nouns and, beginning with the second millennium absolutives as well, could be marked by a suffix *–ene* (*lugal-ene*, "kings"). When nouns were qualified by an adjective, the former was unmarked and the latter reduplicated (*lugal gal~gal*, "great kings," *na$_4$ gal~ gal*, "large stones"). Beginning with the late third millennium both strategies were occasionally combined, possibly for rhetorical effect (*lugal gal~gal-ene*, "great kings"). Rarely, certain nouns were reduplicated for number, possibly expressing totality *(lugal~lugal*, "all(?) kings"). The third person plural copula *meš* acquired the force of a plural marker for nouns in later Sumerian documents and sometimes in narratives, possibly as a paradigm leveling strategy influenced by Akkadian to create inanimate plurals.

Case

Sumerian nouns/noun phrases could be marked by one of nine case affixes, some limited, for obvious semantic reasons, to animates, others to inanimates (directional and locatives). The basic canonical paradigm of Sumerian nominal case declension can be summarized by the following paradigm (Table 5.5):

Table 5.5 Sumerian noun phrase case marking.

Ergative	-e	*lugal-e*	"king"
Absolutive	-0	*lugal-0*	"king"
Dative	-ra	*lugal-ra*	"for the king"
Comitative	-da	*lugal-da*	"with the king"
Allative (terminative)	-še	*uru-še*	"to/towards the city"
Ablative/Instrumental	-ta	*uru-ta*	"from the city"
		tukul-ta	"by means of a weapon"
Locative1 (inessive)	-a	*iri-a*	"in/on top of the city"
Locative2 (locative-terminative)	-e	*iri-e*	"next to/at the city"
Similative (equative)	-gin	*iri-gin*	"like a city"

The ergative *(-e)* marked the most agent-like noun in a clause (the transitive subject) but could also mark the subject/agent of unergative intransitive verbs such as "run." The unmarked absolutive referenced the most patient-like noun in a clause (the transitive object and the intransitive subject); absolutives were the citation form for nouns, verbal nouns were the citation forms for verbs.

The two directional cases marked movement to (allative) and from (ablative) a goal; the latter was polyfunctional and was also used in an instrumental sense. The first locative (inessive), marked the final place where an action took place, while the second one, often designated as locative–terminative by Sumerologists, marked propinquity or adjacency.

Together with the allative the local cases could also be used to mark the goal or object of certain verbs of affection and cognition. They also marked the inanimate third participant of causative constructions. In a related function, locative *-e* (and sometimes *-a*) also served as a functional equivalent of the dative for inanimates with ditransitives and other verb types, for example with verbs of speaking, but also to mark the logical object of complex predicates.

Adjectives

Sumerian had a relatively large number of monomorphemic attributive adjectives (R[oot]) and a larger repertoire of adjectives that were verbal participles (R-a). The distribution of these two forms is not clear. Most adjectives appear in one or the other, but some are attested in both forms. It is often stated that Sumerian had few "basic", i.e. monomorphemic adjectives, but Black (2000; see also Balke 2002) listed over fifty such words and from a comparative point of view that is a substantial number. As a rule, adjectives followed nouns (*ǧi kuǧ*, "consecrated reed"). A small set of adjectives could also be preposed. Thus, the adjective *kuǧ*, "(con)secrated, pure," when used with certain divine names, came first, as in *kuǧ Inin*, "Inana, the sacred one." The rhetorical or poetic difference between the constructions such as *luǧal ǧal*, "great king," and *ǧal kiaĝa*, "great love," is difficult to perceive.

Sumerian did not have any standard morphological mechanism for grading adjectives, that is, for creating comparative and superlative adjectival forms: it only had *ǧal*, "large," but no morphologically derived equivalent of "larger" or "largest." It is possible, however, that constructions such as *niĝ.ADJ.a*, with nominalizer *niĝ-*, were sometimes used as superlatives (*niĝ.duǧ.a*, "the sweetest"). A very small number of basic adjectival stems appear to have suppletive comparatives or superlatives, but the matter needs further study. As noted above, the reduplication of adjectives usually marked the plurality of the preceding noun, but in some cases it clearly signified grading as in, e.g. *ki kuǧ kuǧ.a*, "most sanctified (of) place(s)."

Adverbs

Sumerian utilized two different strategies for manner adverb creation. Denominal adverbs were construed with the derivational suffix *–eš*, e.g. *šul.eš*, "in the manner of/as a young man," or *ud.eš*, "daily." A second suffix *–bi*, originally probably an inanimate deictic,

created adverbs out of verbal/adjectival stems. This was added either directly or following the nominalizing/subordinating suffix *-a*; e.g., *gal.bi*, "greatly," but *ul.a.bi*, "rapidly." A very small number of adjectives could take *–eš* as well as *–bi*. In Old Babylonian texts one begins to encounter the cumulative use of both suffixes as in *gibil.bi.eš* "anew." Some (Meyer-Laurin 2012) have speculated that *–eš* was borrowed from Akkadian terminative-adverbial *–iš* (originally allative, see chapter 7, below), but it is possible that the situation was more complex and that the Sumerian adverbial derivational suffix developed, under Akkadian influence, from the allative *–še* by a process that can be described as grammatical accommodation or shared drift (Michalowski, in press).

In addition, Sumerian had a repertoire of modal, temporal and dimensional adverbs.

Pronouns

Independent Pronouns

Sumerian was a pro(noun)-drop language: independent pronouns did not normally appear in sentences except to indicate emphasis, focus, topicalization, topic shift, contrast, and exclusivity. The independent pronouns were graphemically marked with *–e* (written as *ĝa-e*, *za-e*, etc.; possibly frozen morphophonemic writings); they could only be used for transitive and intransitive subject, and thus could be interpreted as nominative, albeit without any accusative form, hence the final *–e* should not be ergative. Indeed, it has been suggested that this was the close deictive marker (Woods 2000). In addition, personal pronouns could take dative, comitative and equative suffixes but as animates they were not flagged directionals or locatives. The basic forms of the "nominative" are as follows in Table 5.6:

Table 5.6 Sumerian independent pronouns.

	Singular	*Plural*
1.	*ĝe*	*me(n)de(en)*
2.	*ze*	*(ze)menzen*
3.	*ene (pre-OB ane)*	*enene (pre-OB anene)*

Bound Possessive Pronouns

Sumerian also had suffixed pronouns that expressed possessive relationships. These were grammaticalized independent pronouns (possibly as clitics). Singular and plural were not originally distinguished in third person inanimate form. See Table 5.7.

Table 5.7 Sumerian bound possessive pronouns.

1.	*-ĝu*	*-me*
2	*-zu*	*-zu(e)ne(ne)*
3an	*-ani*	*-anene*
3in	*-bi*	*-bi(ene)*

Verbal Morphology

No other part of Sumerian grammar has elicited so many differing interpretations as the morphological analysis of verbs. The different opinions on the subject are too numerous to be addressed here.

Sumerian verbs consisted of a verbal stem and morphological prefixes and suffixes (these have also been described as clitics or preverbs). Verbs were either simple or complex (compound). Some verbs acted as pluractionals: the base could be replaced by a different suppletive one or reduplicated to mark imperfective aspect, plurality of the patient, and habitual or iterative action (Steinkeller 1979). Finite verbs always had prefixes, nonfinite forms such as verbal nouns, adjectives (participles), infinitives and converbs lacked any prefixes (except for negative *nu-*) but could carry suffixes. Affixless deverbal nouns based on the perfective stem functioned as the citation form (e.g., *ĝar*, "placing," but in lexical texts equivalent to the Akkadian infinitive *šakānu*, "to place" because of differing citation traditions). The only prefixless finite form was the positive imperative, which took the form of the singular perfect stem, which could be reduplicated for intensity or repetitive action, (a) followed by a vowel (almost always *–a*; e.g. *tuš-a*, "sit!") and/or (b) followed by what would normally be a series of prefixes, in the same order that they would have occupied in an indicative (prefixes [a-b-c]-R > R-prefixes [a-b-c]), sometimes including the same vowel after the stem (prefixes-R > R-*a*-prefixes). An example of the latter is *hul$_2$-hul$_2$-la-mu-un-da* (*hul~hul.a.mu.n.da*), "greatly rejoice over him," with repetition of the stem for intensity, *–a*, aspect marker *mu–*, and then by comitative *da-* preceded by a third person animate morph (*n-*). Negative imperatives utilized the standard order of verbal affixes in the imperfective aspect, prefixed by *na(m)–*.

Sumerian had a limited repertoire of valency alternations: valency reduction mechanisms were passive and in early texts anticausative; valency-increasing derivations included causatives and applicatives (including benefactives expressed by the dative prefixes).

Simple and Complex Verbs

Simple verbs consisted of an unalterable base that was often, but not exclusively monosyllabic. Complex (compound) predicates were construed with a noun and an inflected verbal base. The noun was inanimate, indefinite and generic and most often unmarked, or, in the case of a restrictive number of predicates, carried a locative case ending, pronoun, was modified by an adjective that functioned as an adverb, or even more rarely by an adjectival morph. The zero-marked non-verbal element formally took the role of the absolutive patient in the clause, although one could also view it lacking any role because of semantic bleaching. As a result, the logical transitive direct object was demoted to an oblique (surface) case, most often one of the locatives. Some complex verbs were etymologically transparent, e.g., *a…ĝar*, "to irrigate" (*a* = "water," *ĝar*, "to place"), but many were not, e.g. *ki…aĝ*, "to love" (*ki* = "place," *aĝ* = "to measure out"). A large group of such predicates was construed with body part nouns (Karahashi 2000, 2004). Body part nouns were prominent in various aspects of Sumerian morphology and word building. Some complex predicates were construed with light verbs such as *dug/e*, "to speak," or *ak*, "to do."

Complex verbs were also useful for accommodating Semitic verbs into Sumerian, mostly by splitting them apart (*saĝ…riĝ*$_7$ < *šarāqu*, 'to) Proper complex predicates constituted one morphological word but two phonological ones.

Marking of Outer Aspect

Sumerian distinguished between perfective and imperfective aspect. The perfective was the unmarked form. The difference was marked in three separate ways: in regular verbs by imperfective morphological marking or by stem reduplication, and, in a small closed class by suppletion. The imperfective suffix was *–e* (some grammars do not recognize the existence of this morpheme).

Within the reduplication class, as a rule, CV and VC stems were fully copied as CV~CV or VC~VC (e.g. *gi*$_4$ */ gi*$_4$*-gi*$_4$, "to return," *si / si~si*, "to fill," *ur / ur-ur*, "to drag"). Some CVC stems lost one or both of their final consonants: thus *biz / bi-iz-bi-iz*, or *biz-biz*, "to drip," but *ĝar / ĝa*$_2$*~ĝa*$_2$, "to place," *hal / hal-ha*, "to divide, distribute," *bir / bi-bi-ir*, "to scatter." It is possible, but not certain, that in certain times and places full reduplication represented pseudo-logographic renditions: e.g. *kiĝ-kiĝ*, "to search," may have been read *kiĝki*, or *naĝ-naĝ*, "to drink," stood for *nana*.

Suppletion for number and in one case for gender, dependent on the number or gender of the absolutive noun, was limited to seven commonly used verbs, "to bring," "go," "stand," etc. and three verbs utilized a limited form of aspectual suppletion by adding a final consonant in the imperfective.

The three aspectual strategies are summarized in Table 5.8; note that the majority of verbs belonged to the first two categories:

Table 5.8 Outer aspect distinctions in the Sumerian verb.

Verb type	*Perfective*		*Imperfective*		
1. Affixation	*šum*		*šum.e*		["to give"]
2. Reduplication	*gi*		*gi.gi*		["to return"]
3. Suppletive	*gin* (sg)	*er* (pl)	*du* (sg)	*sub er* (pl)	["to go"]
	te		*teĝ*		["to approach"]

Basic Morphological Structure of the Sumerian Verb

There are substantial differences in the manner that scholars parse the morphology of the Sumerian verb. This situation is hardly unique: ancient Akkadian speakers also had to contend with diverse interpretations of the verbal structure as evidenced by textual variants in manuscripts of literary compositions and in bilingual scholarly/pedagogical lists of verbal forms. The agglutinative structure of the Sumerian verb was unlike anything they knew from their own language. Additionally, although both were written with the same cuneiform script, the writing system was not used in the same manner when applied to the two languages. During the early second millennium, Akkadian was written primarily with syllabic signs; Sumerian utilized both word and syllabic signs, but bound morphology

consisted almost exclusively of simple syllables, either simple V or CV, with a few VC writings, and therefore such morphs were essentially expressed by morphosyllabic signs. The way that this morphology was realized in oral reading and dictation may have been more complex but writing conventions may have created a form of feedback, affecting the interpretation of the language as more strictly agglutinative than it had been in earlier times when it was a living language.

What follows is a basic analysis that respects the strictly agglutinative construction of affixed words, but the reader should be aware of the tenuous nature of some of the interpretations proffered here. Most succinctly, the morphological structure of the Sumerian verb may be diagrammed in Table 5.9 as follows:

Table 5.9 Basic morphological structure of the Sumerian verb.

1	2	3	4	5	STEM	1	2	3	4
mood	conjunction	voice	applicatives	indexes		imperfective	future	indexes	nominalization

A well-formed finite Sumerian verbal form had to begin minimally with prefix slot 3, although this slot could be empty if preceded by one or two morphemes. The first slot was filled by modal prefixes; indicative was unmarked, but all others, including negative, deontic and epistemic optatives, cohortatives (positive and negative), negative imperative, etc., were marked by separate polyfunctional morphemes (*he–*, *bara–*, *na(m)–*). This slot also included non-modal negative as well as prefix of anteriority (*u–*) as well as two prefixes whose function remains difficult to ascertain (*na–* and *ša–*).

The second slot could be occupied only by a solitary conjunctive prefix (*Vnga–*, or the like). The third slot is the most debated element of Sumerian morphology; some even do not recognize it as a single position. These morphs (*mu–*, *ba–*, *a(l)–* and *i–*; *immV–* was possibly a doubling of the consonant in *mu–* with an initial epenthetic vowel to avoid initial consonant cluster), traditionally labeled as "conjugation prefixes," most likely marked voice (Woods 2008, with a discussion of other opinions). This was followed by a series of applicative prefixes (dative, comitative, two mutually exclusive locatives and two mutually exclusive directives) that, except for most of the dative prefixes, were for the mostly etymologically related to the equivalent nominal case endings.[2] Only rarely did applicatives index these nominal roles, but carried additional meanings, marking ability, causality, etc. The first applicative in a verbal form could be marked for person, gender and number, but those that followed were not. The dative had different forms for all these; if no dative was present, the first applicative could be prefixed by pronominal elements.

Except for the dative, the applicative prefixes were polyfunctional. To provide just one example, the comitative prefix *da-* marked accompaniment, togetherness, joint activity or the object of emotion: a "symmetrical relation between two or more coordinated arguments" (Civil 2010, 527), but also the ability to do something. It also functioned as a transitivizer, creating causatives and allowing an intransitive verb to acquire a direct object in its true applicative function.

There is some uncertainty about the parsing of the elements that could occupy the first two verbal suffix positions. Graphically, one most often encounters the sign sequence *e-de*$_3$, which can be analyzed as imperfective *–e* + future/purpose *–de*, or the other way around as *–ed* + *–e*, although there are also reconstructions that do not recognize the

existence of the imperfective morpheme, in which case the /e/ would be part of the indexes in suffix slot 3.

The indexing of the main participants in a clause was marked by a complex combination of prefixes (slot 5) and suffixes (slot 3). The basic principle of Sumerian indexing ("agreement") was split ergative based on aspect: the perfective had ergative alignment; the imperfective was marked in nominative/accusative fashion. The basic distribution of indexing morphs is presented as follows (A = transitive subject; P = transitive object; and S = intransitive subject) see Table 5.10:

Table 5.10 Distribution of Sumerian indexing morphs.

	prefixes			*suffixes*		
	trans	*intrans*		*trans*	*intrans*	
perfective	A	S	=ergative	P	S	=absolutive
imperfective	P	S	=accusative	A	S	=nominative

There are two areas in which this pattern did not operate fully: (a) when the imperfective S was plural, and (b) in plural S and P forms. The full repertoire of indexes in prefix slot 5 and suffix slot 3 is presented in the following chart (the 1st person singular is particularly problematical, it may have been 0-, or possibly *e-*, or even a glottal stop according to some) see Table 5.11:

Table 5.11 Sumerian indexing morphs.

	Perfective		*Imperfective*	
	(prefix)	*(suffix)*	*(prefix)*	*(suffix)*
	A (ergative)	*S/P (absolutive)*	*A/S (nominative)*	*P (accusative)*
Singular				
1	*0-/e-*	*-en*	*-en*	*0-/e-*
2	*e-*	*-en*	*-en*	*e-*
3an	*n-*	*-0*	*-0*	*n-*
3in	*b-*	*-0*	*-0*	*b-*
Plural				
1	*e- …-enden*	*-enden*	*-enden*	*me-*
2	*e-….-enzen*	*-enzen*	*-enzen*	*?*
3a	*n-….eš*	*-eš*	*-ene (A) / -eš (S)*	*ne-*
3in	*b-*	*-0*	*-0*	*b-*

The final verbal slot was occupied by the nominalizer/subordinator *–a* that turned a finite or non-finite verb into a noun or noun phrase (and could then acquire certain case endings). Occasionally, in texts composed or copied in Old Babylonian times, one encounters the conjunctive/pausal *–ma*, which was a direct late copy from Akkadian. Additionally,

four other morphemes have traditionally been assigned this final slot, but they are better defined as independent elements, not as bound morphemes. They were not commonly used and only one is attested before the Old Babylonian period. The evidential phrasal/sentential direct quote morph *eše*, grammaticalized from the verb "to speak," was probably also an independent word, although some would consider it a bound element, and three were prepositions with meanings such as "apart from," "besides," or "if only."

Sumerian also had five non-finite verbal forms:

a. agentive nouns consisted of the bare verbal stem, most often the perfective (*šu du*, "holder");
b. action nominals, consisting of the imperfective marked stem (*kar.e*, "fleeing");
c. infinitives, construed on the imperfective with the future/purpose de- morph (*šum.e.de*, "to give");
d. participles (adjectives) made up of the perfective followed by the nominalizer *-a* (*ki aĝ.a*, "beloved"); and
e. converbs (adverbs).

The latter could be built on perfective or imperfective forms, followed by *de-* in the imperfective, the nominalizer *-a*, a bound pronoun (*ku.ku.de.a.ani*, "has he was entering") and, in the case of the first and second person singular (plural is unattested), with an element *-ne* (*ku.ku.de.a.ĝu.ne*, "as I was entering").

Sumerian Syntax

Sumerian sentences could be nominal, often with a copula, or verbal. There were several different subordination strategies for relative clause creation. Verbal clauses were most often subordinated by means of the suffixation of the nominalizer/subordinator/complementizer *–a*, added at the end of the verb at the end of the clause.

Full verbal forms, once nominalized, could be treated as noun phrases and used in various local periphrastic constructions with grammaticalized body parts, other nouns, or particles. The nominalized verb was then followed by a locative or directional case ending, sometimes combined with the bridging genitive morpheme. Subordinate clauses could also be introduced by conjunctions such as *tukum-bi*, "if, supposing that, in the event that," or by nouns such *ud*, "day" = "when." Subordination could also be marked on the predicate with the subjective-optative modal prefix *he-* in its epistemic function. The use of this modal for marking interphrase relationships extended beyond subordination. As explained by Civil (2000, 32–33), when the subordinate clause came first (a), it was conditional (should [*he-*], then …), but if the *he-* clause was in final position, often after a copulative clause (b, with copula *-men*), it marked a situation made possible by the main clause, often abilitative. If both clauses contained this prefix, the conditional was counterfactual (c), e.g. (using Civil's examples):

a. *u_2-gu he_2-ni-ib-de_2 ki-bi ga-mu-na-ab-gi_4*
"Should it be lost, let me replace it for him (*na*)."

b. *^{d}nanše-me-en mušen hu-mu-da-ab-du$_8$*
"I am divine Nanše and thus I can set birds free."

c. *lu$_2$-še lugal-gu$_{10}$ he$_2$-me-a sag-ki huš-a-ni he$_2$-me-a*
"If that man over there were my king, if that were his terrifying countenance (lit. "forehead") …"

Such clauses could also be construed with non-finite participial predicates, e.g. *e$_2$ (lugal-e) du$_3$-a*, "the temple built (by the king)." Temporal clauses could have finite or non-finite predicates. The former were nominalized and then marked by the ablative/instrumental *–ta* (e.g. *ba-tu-ud-en-na-ta* [*ba.tud.en.a.ta*], "ever since my birth") while the latter used a converb to form an adverbial phrase (*ku$_4$-ku$_4$-da-ni* [*ku~ku.ed.ani*], "as he/she was entering," or *ku$_4$-ku$_4$-da-ni-ta* [*ku~ku.ed.ani.ta*], "upon/after his/her entrance"]; see Gragg 1973, 128).[3] Finite and non-finite predicates could be suffixed with the similative *–gin$_7$* ("as soon as," "when"). The finite forms could be marked by various words such as *ud*, lit. "day," (*ud …-a* = "when …"; *ud …-a-ta* = "after (the time) when …") or *en-na*, "until, as long as." Anteriority could also be marked by initial verb phrases prefixed by the morph *u$_3$-* (Civil 2008; for temporal clauses see also Civil 1994, 24–25).

Interrogative sentences could be construed with interrogative pronouns (*a-ba-(a)*, "who," *a-na*, "what") or with other question words (e.g. *me-a*, "where?," *a-na-gin$_7$*, "how?," *nam-mu*, "why, what is it that?," *nu-uš*, "why not?," etc.), but also without such words but with rising intonation, which is only occasionally marked in writing with extra vowels (usually /u/) added to the end of the phrase (attached to the verb).

NOTES

1 This is an abbreviated presentation of the author's opinions on the Sumerian language, described more fully in Michalowski (in press).

2 Except for the dative, these are usually referred to as dimensional prefixes; see Michalowski (in press).

3 These were formed with the imperfective participle (in this case reduplicated for aspect), the future/purpose morph *–de*, followed by a bound pronoun (in this case 3.SG animate *–ani*) and, in the second example, by the ablative/instrumental suffix *–ta*.

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CHAPTER SIX

Egyptian

Matthias Müller

Historical and Cultural Context

Introduction

Egyptian and its latest historical stage, Coptic, represent a separate branch of the Afro-Asiatic language family (also called Hamito–Semitic, or Semito–Hamitic: Diakonoff 1965; Hodge 1971; Zaborski 1992, 36–37), wherein it shows the closest relations to Semitic and Berber.

The productive history of Egyptian, which spans from 3000 BCE to CE 1300, divides into two main stages, characterized by a major change from synthetic to analytic patterns in the nominal syntax and the verbal system (Junge 1985), and further into three different phases, which affect mainly the sphere of graphemics (Kammerzell 1995).

The use of Egyptian was confined to the Nile valley and delta, broadly within the borders of modern Egypt. At certain times, the Egyptian dominion exceeded these natural borders, and Egyptian was used as language of the Egyptian-based ruling elite in the occupied territories such as Nubia or the southern Levant. However, the language never established itself as a stabile communication system in those areas, although it seems to have left language contact traces in some of them (Muchiki 1999).

The first two centuries of the common era saw the development of a corpus of mostly magical Egyptian texts in Greek letters, with the addition of Demotic signs to supplement it when phonologically required. This corpus is called "Old Coptic" in the scholarly literature. The adoption of an alphabetic system was standardized with the Christianization of the country, when religious reasons contributed to the divorce between Egyptian culture and its traditional writing systems. The last dated hieroglyphic inscription is from the year

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CE 394. Demotic texts substantially decrease in number, Egyptian being replaced by Greek as a written language (Bagnall 1993, 230–260). The last Demotic graffito is dated to CE 452. In the following century, the new convention, which we call Coptic, appears completely established: the Egyptian language was written in a Greek-derived alphabet. By the fifth century, the Egyptian elite had already lost the knowledge of the nature of hieroglyphs: the *Hieroglyphiká* of Horapollo, a Hellenized Egyptian, offer a "decipherment" of the hieroglyphs fully echoing the late antique symbolic speculations (Boas and Grafton 1993). However, Egypt remained a bilingual country with Greek used for the administration and Coptic for everyday communication as well as religious matters. The Greek influence of Coptic was rather heavy as to a certain amount even particles have been taken over into Coptic. Initially, the Arabic conquest did not alter the situation but simply added Arabic as language of the highest representatives of the court in Cairo. Yet, gradually the latter replaced Greek as means of administrative communication (de Jong & Delattre 2015) and finally even Coptic receded to the Christian religious sphere (Papaconstantinou 2007). Already the thirteenth or fourteenth century Coptic grammar written in Arabic by Athanasius of Qus tells the reader that only Sahidic and Bohairic have survived while the Bashmuric dialect is extinct already (Bauer 1971).

Earlier Egyptian

Earlier Egyptian is the language of all written texts from 3000 to 1300 BCE, surviving in formal religious texts until the third century CE. Its main phases are as follows:

1. *Old Egyptian* (Edel 1955–1964), the language of the Old Kingdom and of the First Intermediate Period (3000–2000 BCE). The main documents of this stage of the language were royal rituals such as the "Pyramid Texts" (Allen 2005), and funerary texts, especially "autobiographies" which contained accounts of individual achievements inscribed in the tombs of the administrative elite (Strudwick 2005). Additionally, a limited number of letters and business documents survive from this period.
2. *Middle Egyptian* (Gardiner 1957), also termed "Classical Egyptian", from the Middle Kingdom to the end of Dynasty XVIII (2000–1300 BCE). Middle Egyptian was the language of classical Egyptian literature, which consisted of ritual texts, for example, the "Coffin Texts" inscribed on the sarcophagi of the administrative elite (Faulkner 1973–78), wisdom texts that conveyed the educational and professional expectations of contemporary Egyptian society, narratives relating adventures of a specific hero and representing the vehicle of individual concerns, and hymns and poetical texts with religious contents, written in praise of a god or the king (for all these see Parkinson 1997). Besides literary texts, administrative documents, for example, the Kahun papyri, and historical records comprise the Middle Egyptian corpus.
3. *Traditional Egyptian*: The language of religious texts (rituals, mythology, hymns) from the New Kingdom to the end of Egyptian civilization. Late Middle Egyptian coexisted with later Egyptian for more than a millennium in a situation of diglossia (Vernus 1996, 560–564). From a grammatical point of view, Late Middle Egyptian maintained the linguistic structures of the classical language, but on the graphemic side, especially in the Greco–Roman period, it showed an enormous expansion of the set of hieroglyphic signs.

Earlier Egyptian was characterized by a preference for synthetic grammatical structures: it displayed a full set of morphological suffixes indicating gender and number, it exhibited no definite article, and it maintained the VSO order in verbal formations:

(1) *sḏm* *zlꜣw* *n-sbꜣ.t-j*
listen (PROSP) scribe to-teaching.FEM-1S

"May the scribe listen to my teaching."

Later Egyptian

Later Egyptian is documented from Dynasty XIX down to the Middle Ages (1300 BCE–CE 1300). Its main phases were as follows:

1. *Late Egyptian* (1300–700 BCE), the language of written records from the second part of the New Kingdom (Černý and Groll 1984; Junge 2005; Neveu 2015). It conveyed the rich entertainment literature of Dynasty XIX, consisting of wisdom texts and tales, as well as new literary genres, such as mythology or love poetry. Late Egyptian was also the vehicle of Ramesside bureaucracy, as documented by the archives of the Theban necropolis or by school texts. Late Egyptian was not a wholly homogeneous linguistic reality; rather, the texts of this phase of the language show various degrees of interference with classical Middle Egyptian, with the tendency of older or more formal texts, such as historical records or literary tales, to display a higher number of borrowings from the classical language, as opposed to later or administrative texts, where Middle Egyptian forms are much rarer (Winand 1992, 3–25).
2. *Demotic* (seventh century BCE to fifth century CE), the language of administration and literature from the pharaonic Late Period to late antiquity (Spiegelberg 1925; Johnson 1991). While grammatically close to Late Egyptian, it radically differs from it in its graphic system. Important texts in Demotic are narrative cycles and moral instructions (Hoffmann 2000; Quack 2005; Hoffmann and Quack 2007).
3. *Coptic* (fourth to fourteenth century CE), the language of Christian Egypt, written in a variety of the Greek alphabet with the addition of six Demotic signs to indicate Egyptian phonemes absent from Greek (Layton 2011). As a spoken, and gradually also as a written language, Coptic was superseded by Arabic from the ninth century onward, but it survives to the present time as the liturgical language of the Christian church of Egypt and in a few linguistic traces it left in spoken Egyptian Arabic (Vittmann 1991).

Besides displaying a number of phonological changes, later Egyptian develops analytic features: suffixal markers of morphological oppositions are dropped and functionally replaced by prefixal indicators; the demonstrative "this" and the numeral "one" evolve into the definite and the indefinite article; periphrastic patterns in the order SVO supersede older verbal formations (Hintze 1950):

(2) *mare-p-sah* *sôtm* *e-ta-sbó*
JUSS-DEF.M-scribe listen to-POSS.FEM.1S-teaching

"May the scribe listen to my teaching."

Dialects

Owing to the centralized nature of the political and cultural models underlying the evolution of Ancient Egyptian society, there is hardly any evidence of dialect differences in pre-Coptic Egyptian (Osing 1975; Lüddeckens 1975; but see now Winand 2015 for Late Egyptian). However, although the writing system probably originated in the south of the country, the origins of the linguistic type represented by Earlier Egyptian are to be seen in northern Egypt, around the city of Memphis, which was the capital of the country during the Old Kingdom. The linguistic origins of Later Egyptian lie in southern Egypt, in the region of Thebes, which was the cultural, religious, and political centre during the New Kingdom (Zeidler 1992, 208; Schenkel 1993, 148).

Coptic is known through a variety of dialects differing mostly in the graphic rendition of Egyptian phonemes, and to a lesser extent also in morphology and lexicon. The most important dialect was Sahidic (from Arabic *al-ṣaᶜīd* "Upper Egypt"), the written standard of the Hermopolite area. Bohairic (from Arabic *al-buḥayra* "Lower Egypt"), the dialect of Alexandria, eventually became the language of the liturgy of the Coptic church. Other important dialects of Coptic literature were Akhmimic from the city of Akhmim in Upper Egypt; Subakhmimic, nowadays called Lycopolitan or Lycodiospolitan, spoken in the area of Asyut (Greek Lycopolis) in Middle Egypt; and Fayyumic, the variety of Coptic from the oasis of Fayyum (Kasser 1991b).

Contact Features

Owing to Egypt's geographically protected location, Ancient Egyptian did not display in its earlier phase (from 3000 BCE) detectable influences from other languages, although the neighboring languages certainly contributed to the lexical development of historical Egyptian. The majority of the lexicon was of Afroasiatic origin and showed convergences especially with the Semitic and Libyan Berber branches of this family (Schenkel 1990, 49–57): for example, *sp.t* 'lip,' cf. Arabic *šafat-un*, *sfḫw* "seven," cf. Arabic *sabq-un*, *jnm* "skin," cf. Berber *a-glim*. There is also some evidence for the possible impact of an Indo-European adstratum in the area of basic vocabulary (Kammerzell 1994, 37–58): e.g. Egyptian *jrṯ.t* */jalaːcat/ "milk," compare Greek *gala*, *galak-tos*; or *ḫntj* */xant-ij/ "before," compare Greek *anti*, Latin *ante*. In some cases, for the same concept, for example, "heart," Egyptian displayed the coexistence of an Afro–Asiatic (*jb* */jib/, cf. Akkadian *libb-um*) and of an Indo–European connection (*ḥꜣtj* */ħuʀtij/, cf. Latin *cor*, *cord-is*), probably rooted in different dialectal areas of the country. During the Late Bronze Age (1550–1100 BCE), contacts with the western Asiatic world led to the adoption of a considerable number of mostly West Semitic loanwords (Hoch 1994), many of which remained confined to the scholarly and administrative sphere.

In the Late Period, after the seventh century BCE, when the productive written language was Demotic, a limited number of (mostly technical) Greek words entered the Egyptian domain. The impact of Greek vocabulary became more dramatic with the Christianization of the country, Hellenistic Greek being the language in which the Christian Scriptures were transmitted in the Eastern Mediterranean world. The number of Greek loanwords in Coptic is therefore very high (Kasser 1991a), depending on the nature

of the text: up to one third of the lexical items found in a Coptic text may be of Greek origin. Most of these words stem from the spheres of (i) religious practice and belief; (ii) administration; and (iii) high culture. In some texts translated from Greek, the influence of this language extends to the realm of syntax. A limited number of words from the military context are Latin, whereas documents from the end of the first millennium begin to display the adoption of loanwords from Arabic. The terms referring to the basic vocabulary, however, usually remain of Egyptian origin: for example, *rmṯ* > *rôme* "man"; *ḥjm.t* > *s(.t)-ḥjm(.t)* > *shime* "woman"; *mw* > *mau* "water"; *sn.wj* > *snau* "two".

Grammatical Sketch

Phonology

Phonemes and Graphemes

The exact phonological value of many Egyptian phonemes is obscured by difficulties in establishing reliable Afro–Asiatic correspondences (Schenkel 1990, 24–57). Vocalism and prosody can be partially reconstructed on the basis of (i) Akkadian transcriptions of Egyptian words and phrases from the second millennium BCE, (ii) Greek transcriptions from the Late Period (corresponding roughly to spoken Demotic), and (iii) the Coptic evidence of the first millennium CE. In the sketch of Egyptian phonology presented below, Egyptological transliterations of words and phrases are given in italics, whereas underlying phonological realities are rendered between slashes and, since they are scholarly reconstructions, always preceded by an asterisk (note that by convention a dot is used to separate the root from morphological affixes; e.g. *sn.t* "sister" < root *sn* + feminine marker *t*). As for Coptic, in spite of a certain number of graphic idiosyncrasies, all dialects share a relatively uniform phonological system. For example, the graphic conventions of Sahidic – as opposed to those of Bohairic – do not distinguish between voiceless and ejective plosives (Sahidic *tôre*, Bohairic *tʲôri* = /tʰoːɹə/ "willow" ~ Sahidic *tôre*, Bohairic *tôri* = /ʔoːɹə/ "hand"); or between glottal and velar fricatives (Sahidic *hrai*, Bohairic *hrai* = /hɹaj/ "above" ~ Sahidic *hrai*, Bohairic *xrai* = /xraj/ "below"). Yet the presence of the corresponding oppositions in Sahidic can be established on the basis of comparative dialectology and of the different impact of these phonemes on their respective phonetic environment (Loprieno 1995, 40–50).

Consonants

The consonantal phonemes of Earlier Egyptian are presented in Table 6.1.

In prehistoric times, a palatalization process led to the emergence of palatal stops (**√wrq* "green, yellow" > *wꜣḏ* /w-r-cʔ/; **-ki* "you(SG.FEM)" > *-ṯ* /cʰi/).

In the Egyptian phonological system, the opposition between voiceless and voiced phonemes (Schenkel 1993, 138–146) appears limited to bilabial stops, whereas in the other series the articulatory opposition – when present – was between voiceless and ejective stop or affricate. Almost all voiced stops develop into fricatives over time. The standard

Table 6.1 System of Earlier Egyptian consonantal phonemes.

		Bilabial	*Labio-dental*	*Alveolar*	*Post-alveolar*	*Palatal*	*Velar*	*Uvular*	*Pharyn-gal*	*Glottal*
Stops	–	p /pʰ/		t /tʰ/		ṯ /cʰ/	k /kʰ/	q /q/		ø /ʔ/
	–	–		d /tˀ/		ḏ /cˀ/	g /kˀ/	–		–
	+	b /b/		(a /d/)		–	–	–		–
Affricates	–			z /t͡s/						
Fricatives	–		f /f/	s /s/	š /ʃ/		ḫ /x/	ḥ /ç/	ḥ /ħ/	
	+								(ᶜ /ʕ/)	
Nasal	+	m /m/		n /n/						
Trill	+							ꜣ /ʁ/		
Approx.	+	w /ʊ/		r /ɹ/		j /j/				
Lateral	+			/l/						

aspiration of the plain stops in Earlier Egyptian was subject to allophonic distribution: as in some varieties of English, aspiration appeared only in stressed syllables. The feature aspiration was marked in writing only in Bohairic Coptic (Hintze 1980, 28).

The dental series was typologically complex: while it probably exhibited a tripartite opposition voiceless–voiced–ejective in the earliest periods, the voiced stop */d/ evolved into a pharyngeal fricative */ʕ/ before the emergence of Middle Egyptian (Zeidler 1992, 206–210), and then to a glottal stop, and eventually zero, in Coptic. During the late third to the early second millennium BCE, the voiceless alveolar /t/ was dropped in final position.

During the late second millennium BCE, the place of articulation of stop consonants tended to be moved to the frontal region (Osing 1980, 946): velars and uvulars were palatalized (Peust 1999, 120–122), palatals became dentals and dentals were dropped in final position (Peust 1999, 123–125). The opposition between uvulars and velars was neutralized during the first millennium BCE. Coptic exhibited a new tripartite opposition "voiceless: ejective: palatalized" in the velar series.

Earlier Egyptian had an alveolar affricate *z* /t͡s/ which by the end of the third millennium BCE had lost its plosive co-articulation and thus conflated with the alveolar fricative *s* /s/. Under certain conditions, the stop /c/ developed into an affricate, since it might also represent word–initial etymological /t/ + /š/ (as in *jpo* "give birth" < **t-špo*). The bilabial voiced stop /b/ was mostly articulated as a fricative [v], but maintained in the plosive articulation in word–final position (Peust 1999, 136–137).

In Old Egyptian, all fricative consonants were voiceless. In Middle Egyptian, a pharyngeal /ʕ/ evolved from earlier /d/ via lateralization. The post-alveolar fricative resulted from a conditioned sound change /ç/ > /ʃ/ which took place in the third millennium BCE. In the first millennium BCE, the tripartite opposition between the back coronal and the dorsal fricatives (/ʃ/ ~ /ç/ ~ /x/) was reduced to a bipartite one (/ʃ/ ~ /x/), with a partial redistribution of the original articulation (Peust 1999, 115–118). The voiced alveolar fricative *z* is only found in Greek borrowings or as a result of feature spreading in nasal environments (such as in Coptic *anzébe* < /ʔanzeːvə/ < /ʔanseːvə/ "school").

In the first millennium BCE a similar neutralization affected the opposition between pharyngeal /ħ/ and glottal /h/ (Osing 1976, 367–368; Peust 1999, 98–99).

Historical evolutions affecting nasals, liquids, and glides during the second millennium BCE (Loprieno 1995, 38) involved (i) the loss of the uvular trill /ʀ/ and its lenition to glottal stop /ʔ/ and eventually to ø (e.g., Old Eg. *kꜣnw* */kʰaʀnaʊ/ > Late Eg. */kʰaʔm/ > Coptic *côm* /kʲoːm/ "garden"), and (ii) the loss of final approximants (as in Old Eg. *ḫpr* */xaːpaɹ/ > Late Eg. */xaːpe/ > Coptic *šôpe* /ʃoːpə/ "to become" vs. Old Eg. *nṯr.w* */nacʰuːɹaʊ/ > Late Eg. */nəṯʰeːɹə/ "gods" > Coptic *ntêr* */ṇtʰeːɹ/ "idols") in the same environments in which a final voiceless dental *t* was dropped.

The reconstruction of the rhotics is complicated by different facts (Müller 2011, 519): etymological considerations would opt for an approximant /ɹ/, which also provides the best explanation for the graphic representation of /l/ by <r> as well as the later attested Lamdacism, i.e., the graphic representation of words containing <r> by <l>, e.g. $^{\text{SAL}}$*rôme*, $^{\text{B}}$*rômi* = $^{\text{F}}$*lami*, in Fayyumic Coptic and Fayyumic Greek (Milani 1981, 221–229). However, the graphic representation of Semitic words containing /d/ in the early second millennium, such as Semitic ^{c}*dš-n* "lentil" > Eg. ^{c}*ršn* > Coptic *aršin* as well as the

Table 6.2 System of Coptic consonantal phonemes.

		Bilabial	*Labio-dental*	*Alveolar*	*Post-alveolar*	*Palatal*	*Velar*	*(Epi)-Glottal*
Stops	–	*p* /pʰ/		*t* /tʰ/		*j* /cʰ/	*k* /cʰ/	*ø* /ʔ/
	–			*t* /tˀ/		*j* /cˀ/	*k* /kˀ/	
						kʲ /kʲ/		
	+	(*b* /b/)		(*d* /d/)			(*g* /g/)	
Affricates	–			*j* /t͡ʃ/				
Fricatives	–		*f* /f/	*s* /s/	*š* /ʃ/		(*x* /x/)	*h* /h/
	+		*b* /v/					
Nasal	+	*m* /m/		*n* /n/				
Approx.	+	*w* /ʋ/		*r* /ɹ/		*i* /j/		
Lateral	+			*l* /l/				

representation of some Egyptian words in contemporary foreign languages, such as Eg. *ry(.t)* "ink" > Hebr. *dyw*, seem to point to the articulation of this phoneme as flap or tap.

Vowels

The set of vowels posited for Earlier Egyptian (Osing 1976, 10–30) is the same as for most Afro–Asiatic languages in their earliest stage of development (Diakonoff 1965, 30–31). See Table 6.3:

Table 6.3 Vowels in Earlier Egyptian.

	Short	*Long*
Front	/i/	/iː/
Central	/a/	/aː/
Back	/u/	/uː/

This system underwent certain historical changes, only some of which can be discussed here. First and foremost, because of the presence of a strong expiratory stress, Egyptian unstressed vowels gradually lost phonological status, until in Coptic they were generally realized as schwa. Only the short unstressed /a/ was maintained in pretonic position in specific phonetic environments (Schenkel 1990, 91–93).

Stressed vowels underwent a global sound change: during the second millennium BCE, long /u:/ turned into /e:/, and short stressed /i/ and /u/ merged into /e/. In the main Coptic dialects and unless followed by glottal stop, this /e/ evolved into /a/.

Around 1000 BCE, long /a:/ became /o:/ (/u:/ after nasals) and short /a/ became /o/, a change limited to the same portion of the Coptic linguistic domain to which /i/, /u/ > /e/ applied. See Table 6.4.

Table 6.4 Vowels in Sahidic Coptic.

	Front	*Central*	*Back*
Stressed			
Long	*i, ei* /iː/		*ou* /uː /
	ê /eː/		*ô* /oː/
Short	*e* /ɛ/	*a* /a/	*o* /ɔ/
Unstressed			
		e /ə/	
		a /a/	

Phonotactics, Alternations and Prosody

In Earlier Egyptian, the stress lay on the ultimate (oxytone) or penultimate (paroxytone) syllable of a word (Schenkel 1990, 63–86). Closed (CVC) and open (CV) syllables could be found in pretonic, tonic, and posttonic position. Two subsequent open syllables forming a moraic foot were exposed to syncopation (CV.CV > CVC). The stressed vowel of a penultimate open syllable was always long (CV:); according to some scholars, extra-syllabic additions under oxytone stress could generate syllables of the type CV:(C) or CVC(C) (Loprieno 1995, 36–37). Syllables of the type V or VC were not allowed in Egyptian. See Table 6.5:

Table 6.5 Earlier Egyptian syllabic structures.

	Pretonic	*Tonic*	*Posttonic*
Open	CV	$CV:$	$CV#
Closed	CVC	CVC	$CVC#
Doubly Closed		$CVCC$	
Long		$CV:C$	

These syllabic structures were modified under the influence of the strong expiratory stress, which always characterized the Egyptian domain (Fecht 1960) and prompted significant typological changes in morphology and syntax. The gradual loss of short unstressed vowels led to the emergence of complex consonantal clusters in syllable onset (i.e. word-initially) in Coptic (Loprieno 1995, 48–50). See Table 6.6.

Morphology

Word Formation

Earlier Egyptian was a language of the flectional or fusional type, in which morphemes were unsegmentable units combining many grammatical functions.

Table 6.6 Coptic syllabic structures.

	Pretonic	*Tonic*	*Posttonic*
Open	CV	$CV:$	$CV#
	#CCV$	#CCV:$	
Closed	CVC	CVC	$CVC#
	#CCVC$	#CCVC$	
Doubly Closed		$CVCC$	
		#CCVCC$	
Long		$CV:C$	
		#CCV:C$	

Nouns

In Earlier Egyptian, nouns were built by adding a suffix to the stem, depending on whether the stem ended in a consonant, in which case the suffix was zero, or a vowel, in which case a w-suffix was added. Nouns were inflected for gender (masculine vs. feminine) and number (singular, dual and plural). Case marking might have been existent in prehistoric phases of the language and even marked by a vowel in Earlier Egyptian, but the latter never showed in writing. The feminine marker was a t-suffix added to the stem. The plural displayed a w- or ww-suffix; the dual had a j-marker added to the form of the singular noun. See Table 6.7:

Table 6.7 Nouns in Earlier Egyptian.

	Masculine	*Feminine*
Singular	*-ø, -w*	*-t*
Dual	*-wj*	*-tj*
Plural	*-ø, -w, -ww*	*-t, -jt, -wt*

Under the pressure of a strong expiratory stress, which reduced the distinctive function of unstressed vowels, the inflectional system underwent a profound crisis in Later Egyptian, requiring a reorganization of the morphological carriers of information.

The general trend was to replace synthetic structures by analytic constructions: for example, nominalized participles (3) or abstract nouns (4) were replaced by lexicalized compounds with nominal classifiers:

(3) PARTICIPLE > "MAN_WHO"-V
t3w *ref-jioue*
steal(PART) "man_who"-steal(INF)
"thief"

(4) ABSTRACT NOUN > "THING_OF"-N
r3 nj-km.t *mnt-rm-n-kême*
mouth of-Egypt "THING_OF"-man-of-Egypt
"Egyptian language"

Thus, because of the loss of regular inflectional patterns, the only device by which Coptic conveyed the distinction between different patterns (masculine vs. feminine, nominal

vs. verbal) was through the presence of morphological markers preceding the noun (5A-C; a zero-marker in the case of C):

(5) A. *rmṯ*: stem *ɹamac- + Ø(MASC.SG) = */ɹaːmac/ > Coptic *p-rôme* "the man"
B. *sn*: stem *san- + at(FEM.SG) = */saːnat/ > Coptic *t-sône* "the sister"
C. *ḫpr*: stem *xapaɹ- + INF.Ø = */xaːpaɹ/ > Coptic S*ôpe* "to become"

Some nouns, however, did retain different forms for masculine versus feminine nouns, e.g. Coptic *son* "brother" vs. *sône* "sister" or singular versus plural, e.g. Coptic *hto* "horse" vs. *htôôr* "horses".

Articles

Whereas Earlier Egyptian did not have any articles, Later Egyptian developed two sets of articles. The indefinite singular article came from the numeral *wᶜj* "one", the plural form developed out of the quantifier *nhy n-* "a little of". The definite article (Loprieno 1980) derived from a grammaticalized anaphoric demonstrative pronoun (*pȝ*, *tȝ*, *nȝ* "this, these").

The definite article also attracted the pronominal affix indicating the possessor, which in Earlier Egyptian followed the head noun (6A). Similarly, deictics now preceded the noun they modified (6B):

(6) A. N-POSS > DEF.ART-POSS-N
sn-f *pe-f-son*
brother-3M.SG POSS.M-3M.SG-brother
"his brother"
B. N=DEICTIC > DEICTIC-N
ḫjm.t=tn *tei-shime*
woman=DEM.FEM DEM.FEM-woman
"this woman"

Adjectives

Adjectives were morpho-syntactically treated like nouns. However, as they could be expanded by adverbs they constituted a separate morphological class in Egyptian. In a common derivational pattern, called nisbation, a morpheme (masculine **ij*, feminine **it*) was added to a stem, which might be different from the stem of the singular or plural noun, to form the corresponding adjective: *nṯr* */naːcaɹ/ "god," *nṯr.w* */nacʰuːɹaʊ/ "gods," *nṯrj* */nucɹij/, *nṯrj.t* */nucɹit/ "divine." Unlike nouns, adjectives had only one plural form for both masculine and feminine: *nṯrj.w* */nucɹiʊ/ "divine."

In Later Egyptian, adjectival specification was more or less completely confined to the syntactic sphere. The use of the specifier after the connective *n* differentiated between genitive (7A) and adjectival construction (7B):

(7) A. *p-hout* *n-ta-sône*
DEF.MASC-male of-POSS.FEM.1S-sister
"my sister's husband"
B. *p-halêt* *n-hout*
DEF.MASC-bird of-male
"the male bird"

Pronouns

Egyptian had a developed system of personal, demonstrative, relative and interrogative pronouns. Reflexive or reciprocal pronouns are not attested. Instead, either a personal pronoun or a prepositional phrase with a personal pronoun was used.

Personal Pronouns

There were four sets of personal pronouns (Kammerzell 1991), including one limited to the ending of the stative form of the verb. Stressed pronouns were used for the topicalized subject of noun clauses in the first and second person (8A), and for the focalized subject of verbal cleft sentences (8B). See Table 6.8:

Table 6.8 Personal pronouns in Earlier Egyptian.

		Stressed	*Unstressed*	*Suffix*
SINGULAR	1st com.	*jnk*	*=wj*	*-j*
	2nd masc.	*ntk, ṯwt*	*=ṯw*	*-k*
	2nd fem.	*ntṯ, ṯmt*	*=ṯn*	*-ṯ*
	3rd masc.	*ntf, swt*	*=sw*	*-f*
	3rd fem.	*nts, stt*	*=sj, =st*	*-s*
(*ṯwt*, *ṯmt*, *swt* and *stt* are more archaic forms)				
DUAL	1st com.		*=nj*	*-nj*
	2nd com.	*nttnj*	*=ṯnj*	*-ṯnj*
	3rd com.	*ntsnj*	*=snj*	*-snj*
PLURAL	1st com.	*jnn, (ntn)*	*=n*	*-n*
	2nd com.	*nttn*	*=ṯn*	*-ṯn*
	3rd com.	*ntsn*	*=sn, =st*	*-sn*

(8) A. *jnk* *jt-k*
1SG(TOPIC) father-2M.SG
"I am your father."

B. *nts* *s-ᶜnḫ* *rn-j*
3F.SG(FOCUS) CAUS.-live (PART) name-1SG
"She is the one who makes my name live."

Unstressed pronouns were used for the object of verbal phrases (9A), for the subject of adjective clauses (9B) and of adverb clauses (9C):

(9) A. *ḫȝb-f=wj*
send(PERF)-3M.SG=1SG
"He sent me."

B. *nfr=tw* *ḥnᶜ-j*
be.good(PART)=2M.SG with-1SG
"You are happy with me."

C. *mk=wj* *m-bɜḥ-k*
behold=1SG in-presence-2M.SG
"Look, I am in front of you."

Suffix pronouns were used as the subject of verb phrases, as possessive marker, and as the object of prepositions:

(10) *dj-k* *r-k* *n-j* *ḫ.t-j*
give(PROSP)-2M.SG toward-2MS.G to-1SG thing.FEM-1SG
"You shall indeed (lit. 'toward-you') give me my possessions."

Demonstrative Pronouns

Demonstratives were characterized by a deictic element preceded by the indicator of gender and number: masculine *pn*, *pf*, *pw*; feminine *tn*, *tf*, *tw*: *rmṯ pf* "that man", *ḫjm.t tn* "this woman". They followed the noun they referred to. While the *-w*-series is distance-neutral, the *-f*-series is distal but is used only in ex- or implicit contrast to a proximal referent. The difference between the *-w-* and *-n*-series is situated on a pragmatic level (Jenni 2010). The plurals (originally neuter) *nw*, *nf*, *nn* were also used as pronouns in partitive constructions with the determinative pronoun *nj*: *nn nj-srj.w* "these officials" < *"this of officials". The determinative pronoun *nj*, feminine *n.t*, plural *n.w* was used primarily as a marker of genitival relation: *rmṯ.w n.w-km.t* "men of Egypt" > "Egyptians". Only members of the *n*-series can be used absolutely: *ḏd-n-f nn* "he said this."

While the demonstratives followed the noun in Earlier Egyptian, those of Later Egyptian precede their nouns: *pɜy-rmṯ* "this man", *tɜy-s.t-ḫm.t* "this woman", *nɜy-jnr* "these stones". Furthermore the pattern of a triple series is replaced by an assumed twofold one, yet, the earlier phases of Later Egyptian do not mark that assumed distance graphically. Hence, *pɜy-rmṯ* might mean "this man" as well as "that man" in Late Egyptian and Demotic. From Late Egyptian onwards the demonstratives can be found used regulary in absolute function: *pɜy*, *tɜy*, *nɜy* "this/that one(s)".

Coptic, however, displays a suppletive paradigm: The proximal function is expressed by the series *pai, tai, nai* (absolute use) and *pei-, tei-, nei-* (use in front of noun). For the expression of the distal function Coptic employs an expression being etymologically a relative clause "which is there": *etmmau* < *nty n-ỉm=w* (attested in Demotic) in Sahidic: *n-ϩmhal etmmau* "those servants" and *et-tê* in Bohairic: *pi-rômi ettê* "that man". The absolute used pronoun is *pê, tê, nê*.

Relative Pronouns

The relative pronoun was masculine *ntj*, feminine *nt.t*, plural *nt.w* "who, which, that." It was morphologically derived from the determinative pronoun. In Earlier Egyptian, these pronouns agreed in gender and number with the head noun, which had to be semantically specific. Characteristic for Earlier Egyptian was the presence of a relative pronoun masculine *jwtj*, feminine *jwt.t*, plural *jwt.w*, which semantically incorporated negation ("who not/ which not/ that not").

In Later Egyptian, the gender-number-agreement had been dispensed with and only one morpheme, i.e. the masculine *ntj*, was further employed in both affirmative and negative construction as a relative particle.

Interrogative Pronouns

Egyptian employed interrogative adverbs and interrogative pronouns. The majority of interrogative pronouns were generic: *m* "who? what?," *jḫ* "what?," *jšst* "what?" They could be combined with prepositions or particles to form complex pronouns: *jn-m* "who?," *ḥr-m* "why?," literally "on-what?" Interrogative pronouns could not be used as relative pronouns.

Verbal Morphology

Finite Verb Stems

Earlier Egyptian finite verb phrases displayed a limited number of stems (three or four) indicating tense, aspect, and voice followed by either the pronominal suffix or the nominal subject. Typical Egyptian verb inflection (utilizing the suffix pronouns) is illustrated in (11) with the verb-stem *sḏm* "hear":

(11)	SINGULAR	1st com.	*sḏm-j*	"I hear"
		2nd masc.	*sḏm-k*	"you hear"
		2nd fem.	*sḏm-ṯ*	"you hear"
		3rd masc.	*sḏm-f*	"he hears"
		3rd fem.	*sḏm-s*	"she hears"
	PLURAL	1st com.	*sḏm-n*	"we hear"
		2nd com.	*sḏm-ṯn*	"you hear"
		3rd com.	*sḏm-sn*	"they hear"

In addition to variations in the stem, complementizers inserted between the stem and the subject indicated some verbal features: The most important of these indicators were *n* for the preterite tense (*sḏm.n-f* "he heard"), *t* for non-paradigmatic occurrences of the perfective aspect (*n sḏm.t-f* "before he had heard") and for the prospective aspect of a few irregular verbs (e.g., *jn.t-f* "he will fetch"), *w* for prospective aspect (*mrj.w-f* "he will love") and passive voice (in perfective stems, *sḏm.w-f* "it was heard"), *tw* for passive (in non-perfective stems, *sḏm.tw-f* "it is heard").

A particular verbal stem displayed the tonic vowel between the second and the third radical, and in weak verbal classes the reduplication of the second radical: stp- */saˈtap-/ (choose.REL), mrr- */maˈɹaɹ-/ (love.REL). A similar verbal form indicated the imperfective aspect in Semitic languages. In Egyptian, this may have indeed been the original meaning of the form, but in the language of literature its main function was to mark the verb phrase as pragmatic theme of the sentence in which it appeared (Polotsky 1976, 4–25):

(12) *jrr* *ḥm-k* *r-mrj.t-f*
do.IMPF Majesty-2M.SG to-desire(REL).FEM-3M.SG
"Your Majesty acts as he desires."

The imperative had no suffix element in the singular, but sometimes, especially with weak verbs, a semi-vocalic suffix in the plural.

Egyptian also exhibited a verbal form, variously called Old Perfective, Stative, or Pseudoparticiple, which indicated the wide semantic range of "perfectivity," from perfective aspect (with intransitive verbs) to passive voice (with transitive verbs). This form was built with a special set of suffixes that were etymologically linked to the forms of the Semitic suffix conjugation (Schenkel 1990, 104–108; Kammerzell 1991, 165–199):

(13) *mk=wj* *jj-kw*
behold=1SG come(STAT-1SG)
"Look, I have come." i.e., "I am here."

In Later Egyptian, finite VSO forms were replaced by a paradigm of SVO-constructions, called "sentence conjugations" or "clause conjugations" (Polotsky 1971, 238–268), resulting from the grammaticalization of a form of the verb "to do" followed by the infinitive:

(14) VSO > SVO
Old Eg. > Late Eg. > Coptic
sḏm.ḫr-f *ḫr-jr-f-sḏm* *ša-f-sôtm*
hear.AOR-3M.SG AOR-do-3M.SG-hear AOR-3M.SG-hear
"He usually hears."

In this way, Coptic ultimately has maintained only two flectional patterns from most verbal roots: (i) the infinitive for predicates indicating process, and (ii) the stative (also called "qualitative") derived from the third masculine singular form of the Old Perfective, for stative predicates (Polotsky 1990, 197-221):

(15) *f-kôt* vs. *f-kêt*
3M.SG-build(INF) 3M.SG-build(STAT)
"he builds" "it is built"

Non-finite forms of the Coptic verb are the infinitive, which usually indicates (i) activities (*ei* "to come"), (ii) accomplishments (*ôô* "to conceive"), or (iii) achievements (*cine* "to find"); and the qualitative, which conveys states (*eet* "to be pregnant"). Although synthetic participial functions were analytically conveyed in later Egyptian by relative constructions, there were still few remnants of Ancient Egyptian synthetic participles (*mai-noute* "lover of god" > "pious"). Finite verbal forms in Coptic consisted of a marker which conveyed aspectual, temporal, or modal features, followed by the nominal or pronominal subject and by the infinitive (for actions) of the verb: *a-prôme sôtm* "the man heard.", *a-i-hmoos* "I sat down." In the present and imperfect tense, the infinitive could be replaced by the qualitative (for states): *ti-hkaeit* "I am hungry." The most important verbal markers were as follows (the double stroke indicates pronominal subjects, the simple stroke nominal subjects):

16A. *e=*, *ere-*: circumstantial present (*e=i-hkaeit* "while I am hungry")
16B. *ša=*, *šare-*: aorist of habit (*ša=i-ka-pa-joi na=i* "I keep my ship for me")
16C. *me=*, *mere-*: negative aorist (*me=f-sôtm* "he cannot hear")

16D. *e*=PRON-*e-*, *ere-*N *e-*: optative (*e=s-e-šôpe* "may it happen," "amen")
16E. *nn(e)=*, *nne-*: negative optative (*nne=f-ibe ša-eneh* "may he never be thirsty")
16F. *mar(e)=*, *mare-*: jussive (*mare-pekran uop* "hallowed be your name")
16G. *(n)tare=*, *(n)tare-*: final (*aitei tar=u-ti nê=tn* "ask, that you may be given")
16H. *šant(e)=*, *šante-*: completive (*šante-prê hôtp* "until the sun sets down")
16I. *mpat(e)=*, *mpate-*: negative completive (*mpat=f-ei* "he has not yet come")
16J. *a=*, *a-*: preterite (*a-u-ša šôpe* "a festival took place")
16K. *mp(e)=*, *mpe-*: negative preterite (*mpi-raše* "I did not rejoice")
16L. *ne=*, *nere-*: imperfect (*nere-tmaau n-iêsous mmau* "Jesus' mother was there")
16M. *nter(e)=*, *ntere-*: temporal (*ntere=f-je nai* "when he said these things")
16N. *n=*, *nte-*: conjunctive (*e=k-e-nau n=g-ime* "may you see and understand")

In addition to these so-called "sentence (or clause) conjugations," Coptic displayed (i) an inflected form of the infinitive (*p-tre=f-fsôtm* "the fact that he hears") that could also be used after preposition (*hm-p-tre=f-sôtm* "while he heard"); (ii) a special suffix conjugation for adjective verbs (*nanu=f* "he is good"); and (iii) a marker for the future of the present and imperfect tense (*ti-na-sôtm* "I shall hear").

Particles

The basic negative particle was n, which was used for unmarked (*contradictory*) negation:

(17) *n* *rḏi-f* *n-j* *mw*
not give(PERF)-3M.SG to-1SG water
"He did not give water to me."

A morphological variant of n, conventionally transcribed nn, is used in noun clauses to negate existence (18A) and in verb clauses to negate prospective aspect (18B):

(18) A. *nn* *mȝᶜ.tw*
not.exist trust.ADJ.PL
"There are no trustworthy people."
B. *nn* *mwt-k*
not.exist die(PROSP)-you
"You shall not die."

Syntax

General Remarks

Egyptian phrasal syntax was head-initial. This distribution was obligatory with nominal (noun-genitive, noun-adjective), adjectival and prepositional phrases. In Earlier Egyptian, however, determiners such as quantifiers or demonstrative pronouns followed the noun they referred to. From a diachronic point of view, the hierarchy within nominal phrases changed from Earlier Egyptian *head – determiner – quantifier – adjective phrase – genitive*

nominal phrase to Later Egyptian *determiner – head – quantifier – adjective phrase – genitive nominal phrase.*

Verbal valency limitations circumvent the double accusative position even in causative constructions (both morphological [synthetic] causatives in s- and syntactic [analytic] causatives with the verb *rdj* "to give" plus clause). A necessary second object must be introduced via a prepositional phrase. For a detailed study of verbal valency in Egyptian see Hafemann (2002).

Egyptian syntax knew four types of sentences. These are classified according to the phrase which occupied the predicate position: noun, adjectival, adverbial (for these three see Loprieno, Müller, and Uljas 2017), and verbal clauses. Syntactic patterns proved rather stable throughout the history of Egyptian. Late Egyptian (Satzinger 1981) and Coptic (Polotsky 1987, 9–43) displayed more or less the same variety of sentence-types known in Earlier Egyptian.

In noun clauses, the predicate is a noun: S > [NP NP] (Loprieno, Müller, and Uljas 2017, part 2). Any NP could occur in either position; pronouns, however, had a tendency to occupy the initial position. Typical were bipartite (juxtaposed NP's) and tripartite patterns (adding a copula as third element).

The distribution of predicate and subject was not consistent. Both S > [NP_S NP_P] and S > [NP_P NP_S] were possible. The syntactic order Predicate(-Copula)-Subject was modified into a pragmatic order Topic-Comment in (i) classifying sentences when the subject was a first- or second-person pronoun (19A), (ii) identifying sentences when both the subject and the predicate were determined or semantically specified (19B), and (iii) in cleft sentences, when the predicate was a participle and the subject is focalized (19C) (Loprieno 1988, 41–52):

(19) A. *ntk* *jtj* *n-nmḫw*
you father for-orphan
"You are a father to the orphan."

B. *zḫꜣw-f* *pw* *ḥrw*
scribe-3M.SG COP Horus
"His scribe is the god Horus."

C. *jn* *sn.t-j* *s-ᶜnḫ* *rn-j*
FOCUS sister.FEM-1SG CAUS-live (PART) name-1SG
"My sister is the one who makes my name live."

Later Egyptian showed typologically similar patterns.

The predicate position of adjectival clauses is occupied by an adjective or a participle: S > [AdjP NP] (Loprieno, Müller and Uljas 2017, part III). In the subject position either a nominal phrase or a clause may appear. The normal order of constituents is Predicate-Subject (20):

(20) A. *nfr* *mtn-j*
be.good path-1SG
"My path is good."

In the presence of a first-person subject, the bipartite nominal pattern was used.

In Later Egyptian, this pattern tended to become very rare: although it still existed in Late Egyptian, it is completely absent in Demotic and Coptic, where adjectival clauses were replaced by nominal (21A from Coptic) or verbal patterns (21B from Demotic).

(21) A. *ang-u-agathos*
1S-IDF.SG-good
"I am good."

B. *pȝ-ḫm* *nm* *nȝ-ꜥȝ-f* *ỉw-ḏbȝ-rn-f*
DEF.M-little dwarf ADJV-be.great-3M.SG to-because-name-3M.SG
"The little dwarf is big because of his name."

In adverb clauses, the predicate is an adverbial or prepositional phrase: S > [NP AP] (Loprieno, Müller, and Uljas 2017, part I). The word order is always Subject–Predicate. In Earlier Egyptian, adverbial main clauses were often introduced by particles functioning as discourse markers (22A); in absence of a discourse marker, the clause is to be understood as syntactically dependent (22B):

(22) A. *jw* *nzw* *jr* *p.t*
COMPL king towards heaven.FEM
"Now the king is (directed) towards heaven."

B. *ḫr.t-k* *m-pr-k*
rations.FEM-2M.SG in-house-2M.SG
"(Because) your rations are in your house."

In Later Egyptian, the syntax of adverb clauses did not change.
In verb clauses, the predicate is a verbal phrase (Loprieno 1995, 183–220); the word order is Predicate–Subject:

(23) *jj.n-j* *m-nw.t-j*
come.PRET-1SG from-city.FEM-1SG
"I came from my city."

As we observed in the discussion of morphology, a peculiarity of Egyptian syntax was that the predicate of verb clauses might function as the theme of the utterance.

In general, Egyptian verbal syntax displayed a comparatively high incidence of topicalization and focalization phenomena. The most common topicalization device was the extraposition of the topicalized argument through the particle *jr* "concerning" (24A); used as a conjunction, the same particle introduced the protasis of a hypothetical clause (24B):

(24) A. *jr* *sf* *wsjr* *pw*
concerning yesterday Osiris COP
"As for 'yesterday', it is Osiris."

B. *jr* *jqr-k* *ǧrg-k* *pr-k*
concerning be.important(PROSP)-2M.SG found(PROSP)-2M.SG house-2M.SG
"If you become important, you should found a household."

Unmarked VPs not introduced by discourse markers were less frequent than in related languages. They mostly functioned as dependent or modal clauses:

(25) *ḫȝy-k*
appear(PROS)-2M.SG
"May you appear."

In Later Egyptian verb clauses (Polotsky 1990, 175–202), the predicate was conveyed by SVO-patterns in which the subject could be extraposed to the right of the predicate and anticipated by a cataphoric pronoun in the regular syntactic slot:

(26) *a-u-rime* *nci-ne-snêu*
PRET-3M.PL-weep(INF) namely-DEF.PL-brothers(PL)
"The brethren wept."

In Coptic verbal sentences, the tendency to have the verb phrase function as theme or rheme of the utterance reached its full development: in the former case, the verb phrase was preceded by a relative marker *e-* or *nt-* and is described in linguistic literature as "second tense" (Polotsky 1987, 129–140; Uljas 2015); in the latter, the form is preceded by the circumstantial marker *e-* and is described as "circumstantial" (Polotsky 1990, 225–260):

(27) *nt-a-n-jpo-f* *e-f-o* *n-blle*
REL-PRET-1.PL-beget(INF)-him CONJ-3M.SG-do(STAT) as-blind
"He was born to us blind." (lit. "That we begot him was while he is as blind.")

The typical phrasal coordination pattern of Earlier Egyptian was juxtaposition. Later Egyptian regularly used conjunctions developed out of prepositions such as *ḥmᶜ* or jrm "together with," but even these conjunctions were initially limited to NP-coordination.

In Earlier Egyptian only adverb and verb clause could be converted into a relative clause. Later Egyptian shows no ban on noun and adjectival clauses (as far as they survive) any longer. Earlier Egyptian displays a fully developed paradigm of participles and relative forms in addition to relative clauses introduced by a relative pronoun (positive and negative, see above). Diachronically, the synthetic morphological forms for relative forms and participles tended to be replaced by analytic relative clauses built with the help of a relative marker (nty > *et*, see above). Egyptian marks the difference between restrictive ("a man who …") and non-restrictive ("a man, who …") relative clauses (Collier 1991; Müller 2015). Restrictive clauses are marked by the employment of the relative pronoun/particle, participles or relative forms, non-restrictive clauses by the virtual relative clause, i.e. as circumstantial clauses:

(28) A. *pȝ-bḫn* *nty-m-ḫnw-f*
DEF.M-castle REL-in-inside-3M.SG
"… the castle that is within …"
B. *pȝ-bḫn* *jw-f-m-ḫnw-f*
DEF.M-castle DEP-3M.SG-in-inside-3M.SG
"… the castle, that is within, …"

Adverbial clauses could be used either initially or following the main clause. Earlier Egyptian typically employed prepositions as markers, while Later Egyptian developed a set of conjunctional markers or morphological verbal forms (see the list given above for Coptic). Conditional clauses could be marked as real or hypothetical. Before Coptic concessive conditionals have no specific marking.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

Akkadian

Rebecca Hasselbach-Andee

Introduction

Akkadian is a Semitic language that is attested in written form from about 2600 BCE to the first century CE. Although Akkadian is attested in writing until the first century CE, it probably died out as a spoken language around the mid-first millennium BCE, when it was replaced by Aramaic (Huehnergard and Woods 2004, 218; Kouwenberg 2010, 9). The language, whose native designation is *akkadû*, is named after the city of Akkad, which was the capital of the Sargonic Empire (2350–2170 BCE).

Within the Semitic language family, Akkadian belongs to what is called "East Semitic". The only other member of East Semitic is Eblaite, the language of the ancient Syrian city state of Ebla, which is attested from 2400–2300 BCE (see chapter 8). All other Semitic languages belong to the "West Semitic" branch of the language family, which includes, among others, Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic, Ethiopian Semitic, and Old South Arabian. Besides being the only members of East Semitic, Akkadian and Eblaite represent the oldest Semitic languages known so far and predate all other Classical Semitic languages. As such, both Akkadian and Eblaite are of great importance for understanding the early history of the Semitic language family.

Akkadian was spoken in ancient Mesopotamia, which roughly corresponds to the area of today's Iraq and parts of northern Syria. In the mid-second millennium BCE, Akkadian became the international language of diplomacy, or *lingua franca*, and spread beyond its initial area of attestation into the Levant, Anatolia, and Egypt (see chap. 19). During its time as *lingua franca*, Akkadian archives and texts have been found in Syrian sites such as Alalaḫ, Emar, and Ugarit, in the Anatolian site of ancient Hattuša (modern Boghazköy), and in Egypt at the site of Tell el-Amarna.

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Akkadian is written in cuneiform, a script that the speakers of Akkadian took over from Sumerian and adapted for writing their own language.

Akkadian Dialects and Textual Evidence

Because of its wide geographical and chronological spread, Akkadian is commonly divided into several dialects. The three major dialects are Old Akkadian, Babylonian, and Assyrian. Old Akkadian covers the evidence from the earliest attestations to the beginning of the so-called Ur-III period, which saw a renaissance of the use of Sumerian, that is, it roughly covers the period between 2600–2112 BCE (von Soden 1995, 3; Hilgert 2002, 120–133). Babylonian and Assyrian are contemporary dialects and cover the period after Old Akkadian, that is, from 2112 BCE to the first century CE. Assyrian is the dialect used in the north-eastern areas of Mesopotamia, with its homeland along the upper course of the Tigris, while Babylonian is used in the south. The two dialects are further divided chronologically into Old Babylonian (approximately 2000–1500 BCE), Middle Babylonian (1500–1000 BCE), Neo Babylonian (1000–600 BCE), Late Babylonian (600 BCE–100 CE), and Old Assyrian (2000–1500 BCE), Middle Assyrian (1500–1000 BCE), and Neo Assyrian (1000–600 BCE) (Huehnergard 1998, xxiii). Furthermore, there is a literary dialect called "Standard Babylonian", which starts to appear after the Old Babylonian period, although it is best attested in the first half of the first millennium BCE (see chap. 25). The chronological division of the dialects is based on historical developments rather than linguistic factors, that is, the periods distinguished follow major events and periods of the history of Mesopotamia rather than linguistic developments within the dialects themselves.

The Akkadian dialects can be summarized as in Table 7.1.

Of the two main later dialects, the northern dialect Assyrian was more restricted in use from a geographical point of view in that it was primarily used in Assyria proper – with exception of the Old Assyrian period, for which most of the textual material was discovered in the Anatolian trade post of Kültepe (ancient Kaneš). The southern dialect, Babylonian, was also used beyond Babylonia itself. It underlies the international diplomatic variant of Akkadian used in the mid-second millennium BCE, and is also often used by Assyrian kings for their inscriptions and annals (Huehnergard and Woods 2004, 219). In general, Assyrian is more archaic than Babylonian from a linguistic point of view, while Babylonian exhibits various linguistic innovations not shared by Assyrian.

Table 7.1 Akkadian dialect division.

Old Akkadian (app 2600–2112 BCE)	
Early Babylonian (2112– app 2000 BCE)	
Old Babylonian (app. 2000–1500 BCE)	Old Assyrian (app. 2000–1500 BCE)
Middle Babylonian (app. 1500–1000 BCE)	Middle Assyrian (app. 1500–1000 BCE)
Neo Babylonian (app. 1000–600 BCE)	Neo Assyrian (app. 1000–600 BCE)
Late Babylonian (app. 600 BCE–100 CE)	

The earliest evidence for Akkadian appears in the form of personal names that occur in Sumerian texts and a few loanwords that Sumerian borrowed from Akkadian. The first actual texts that can be identified as Akkadian start to appear around 2350 BCE.

Up to today, almost 1 000 000 Akkadian texts have been excavated, although the majority of these texts remains unpublished (Huehnergard and Woods 2004, 218). The genres of texts attested in Akkadian reach from private letters, administrative documents, legal documents, to literary works such as royal inscriptions, annals, epics, myths, ritual texts, collections of omina, divination texts, and scholarly texts – the latter include mathematical and medical texts. The distribution of text genres strongly depends on period and dialect. During the Old Akkadian period, most of the textual material consists of private letters, economic texts, and royal inscriptions. Only one fully preserved literary composition has been discovered for this period so far. This picture changes drastically with the Old Babylonian period. During the Old Babylonian period, which is often considered the "classical phase" of Akkadian, the attested text genres increase significantly and start to include literary compositions such as epics and myths. For Old Assyrian, the evidence primarily consists of letters, administrative and legal documents, and a few royal inscriptions. Middle Babylonian and Middle Assyrian are primarily known from letters, economic texts, and a few royal inscriptions, while the evidence for Neo and Late Babylonian, as well as Neo Assyrian primarily comes from letters and economic texts (Huehnergard and Woods 2004, 219; Kouwenberg 2010, 17). After the Old Babylonian period, most literary texts, including myths, epics, royal inscriptions, historical texts, incantations, and scientific texts were written in the literary dialect Standard Babylonian, which explains why these genres are hardly attested in the Babylonian and Assyrian dialects after the mid-second millennium BCE. As mentioned above, Standard Babylonian particularly flourished in the first half of the first millennium BCE.

Despite having literary versus non-literary genres and even literary dialects such as Standard Babylonian, written forms of Akkadian most likely differed significantly from their corresponding spoken variants, especially in later periods. This can be deduced from the fact that there is astoundingly little change in the written form of Babylonian and Assyrian from their earliest to latest attestations. There are minor changes, such as loss of mimation, erosion of certain vowels, loss of certain grammatical categories, but these changes are not as predominant as might be expected for such a long period. This indicates that the written forms of the dialects remained relatively stable, while the spoken forms most likely underwent more significant changes that are only partially reflected in writing (Kouwenberg 2010, 10). Given the potential differences between written and spoken forms of Akkadian, it is a possibility that Akkadian might have exhibited some degree of diglossia, at least in its later dialects, although this assumption requires further study (for more detail see chap. 24).

Language Contact

Because of its long attestation, Akkadian provides ample evidence for the use of the language based on different social settings and interactions with other languages, that is, sociolinguistic factors. The following discussion will focus only on one of these factors, language contact.

Speakers of Akkadian were in contact with various other cultures and languages throughout the almost three millennia that Akkadian flourished as a spoken and written language. Languages with which Akkadian came into contact include Semitic and non-Semitic languages such as Sumerian, Hurrian, Amorite, and Aramaic, to name just a few. The influence these languages had on Akkadian varies depending on the intensity of the contact and the prestige relationship between the languages, as will be described in more detail in the following sections.

Akkadian and Sumerian

One of the earliest languages with which Akkadian came into contact was Sumerian. Sumerian (see chapter 5) was primarily spoken in southern Mesopotamia. Akkadian thus shared a significant area of its geographical distribution with Sumerian. It is unclear when exactly the contact between the two languages started, that is, when Akkadian speakers migrated into Mesopotamia. The most common assumption is that the contact goes back to at least as early as the turn of the fourth to third millennium BCE (Zólyomi 2011, 396). The contact between Akkadian and Sumerian when both languages were fully productive spoken languages thus lasted for at least 1,000 years. Sumerian culture and language was prestigious in Mesopotamia and remained so even beyond the time when Sumerian died out as a spoken language around the end of the third/beginning of the second millennium BCE (Zólyomi 2011, 397). Because of the geographic proximity, time-span of contact, and the fact that Sumerian was the prestige language during the time of contact, Sumerian had significant influence on Akkadian that is reflected in Akkadian phonology, syntax, and lexicon. Many of the changes that are caused by influence from Sumerian are already completed or almost completed by the time Akkadian starts to be fully written.

Features that are commonly attributed to Sumerian influence in Akkadian include the loss of the five typical Semitic guttural phonemes /ʾ/, /h/, /ḫ/, /ʿ/, and /ġ/, which can be traced throughout the Old Akkadian period. Sumerian did not have these phonemes, which is thought to have triggered their loss in Akkadian. Another feature that is clearly borrowed from Sumerian is the basic Akkadian word order Subject (S) Object (O) Verb (V). This word order is not common in classical Semitic languages, which usually have VSO order – except Ethiopian Semitic, which borrowed its typical SOV order from the surrounding Cushitic languages. Furthermore, Akkadian has numerous loanwords from Sumerian, including words such as *ekallum* "palace", from Sumerian É.GAL, literally "big house". Altogether, Sumerian loanwords constitute approximately 7% of Akkadian vocabulary and primarily consist of nouns (Zólyomi 2011, 402; for a more detailed discussion of Sumerian–Akkadian contact see chapter 21).

Akkadian and Amorite

From a chronological point of view, the next language, or better, language or dialect cluster with which Akkadian came into contact is Amorite. Amorite is solely attested in personal names and a few loanwords in Akkadian that start to appear in cuneiform texts around 2100 BCE and disappear after the Old Babylonian period. It is unclear where exactly the Amorites came from, a common theory is that they originated in the Syrian

steppe (Streck 2000, 29). Texts from the third millennium BCE from sites such as Ebla and Sumerian texts from Mesopotamia proper associate the Amorites, named *mar-du* or *mar-tu*, with the area around the middle Euphrates, especially the areas around Tuttul and Emar, which are situated northwest of Babylonia (Streck 2000, 31–32).

After the end of the Ur-III period (2112–2000 BCE), the Amorites took over political control over many Babylonian cities, including Larsa, Kish, Marad, Uruk, and, most importantly, Babylon. Their sphere of influence also increased outside of Babylonia proper and included cities such as Mari, Yamḫad (Aleppo), Qatna, Karkemish, and Alalaḫ. During the period of political dominance and the rise of an Amorite dynasty, Amorite names are found throughout Babylonia. After the reign of Ḫammurapi (1728–1686 BCE), himself of Amorite descent, Amorite names became fewer, which shows the progressive assimilation of the Amorite population into Babylonian culture (Streck 2000, 38). The Amorites, who, as far as we know, originated as animal breeding nomads of the Syrian steppe, thus rose to political power, dominating one of the main political dynasties of the early second millennium BCE within a relative short period of time. Given the political dominance of the Amorite dynasty one might expect some influence of the Amorite language on Akkadian, but, surprisingly, this is not the case. Besides the attested personal names and a few loanwords, Amorite left no traces in Akkadian. In Old Babylonian, there are about 90 certain loanwords from Amorite. Most of these cover semantic fields such as tribal units and tribal hierarchy, animal husbandry, topography, agriculture, hunting, and a few others, that is, they cover areas that are related to Amorite life that are not typical for Mesopotamian culture and are thus need-based (Streck 2000, 123–124; Streck 2011, 366). These loanwords, however, are primarily attested in peripheral Akkadian dialects such as those from areas dominated by Amorites including Mari, Tuttul, and Qatna. Only very few loanwords are attested outside this area. In other words, only very few Amorite loanwords made it into the Akkadian dialect of Babylonia proper (Streck 2000, 125). In addition, most of these loanwords are only attested five times or less, which again shows the limitations of Amorite influence. After the Old Babylonian period, the use of Amorite loanwords becomes even less frequent (Streck 2011, 366). All this indicates how little influence the language of the politically dominant dynasty had on the local Akkadian dialects. This situation can only be explained by the lack of prestige of Amorite in comparison with the culturally and linguistically dominant Akkadian and (at this point only written) Sumerian, and by how the immigrating Amorites quickly assimilated to the dominating pre-existing culture and languages of Mesopotamia, giving up their own language in the process.

Akkadian and Hurrian

In the mid-second millennium BCE, Akkadian became the international language of diplomacy in the Ancient Near East. This development brought it into direct contact with languages located further to the west of Mesopotamia, such as Hurrian (see chapter 11). Hurrian was, as far as it is possible to tell, spoken in the northern parts of Iraq, northern Syria, and southeast Turkey. It is attested from the last quarter of the third millennium BCE until the end of the second millennium BCE (Wilhelm 2004, 95). In the earlier periods, it is primarily attested in the form of personal names in Akkadian and Sumerian texts and a

few scattered texts found in Babylonia and the area of the Middle Euphrates (Mari, Tuttul). The bulk of the Hurrian textual material dates to the second half of the second millennium BCE and was found in Ugarit, Emar, and especially in Boghazköy, ancient Ḫattuša, the capital of the Hittite kingdom (Wilhelm 2004, 97).

Hurrian was the language of the Mitanni, who were a significant cultural and political element in the Ancient Near East during the second half of the second millennium BCE. The kingdom of Mitanni lay north of the Egyptian-controlled areas of the Levant, although it is uncertain when it was established and what its exact borders have been (Kuhrt 1995, 284). What is known is that during the second half of the second millennium BCE, Mitanni was a powerful kingdom that was equal to Egypt in terms of international politics (Kuhrt 1995, 283). The appearance of Hurrian names in Old and Middle Babylonian texts from Babylonia proper shows that the Hurrians also had a significant presence in Mesopotamia. Hurrian and Akkadian speakers thus were in contact for a period of at least several hundred years. Despite the prolonged contact and the occurrence of personal names and a few Hurrian words in Akkadian texts that attest to the contact situation, Hurrian did not leave any lasting traces on the core dialects of Akkadian in Mesopotamia.

The contact of the two languages led to another phenomenon, however. Because of the use of Akkadian as *lingua franca*, speakers of Hurrian often used Akkadian in writing. Akkadian texts written by Hurrians tend to exhibit significant Hurrian substrate influence. Texts found in Nuzi and Alalaḫ, for example, which both had a sizeable Hurrian population, frequently display Hurrian influence in the lexicon and grammar (Wilhelm 2004, 97). The Hurrian influence on Akkadian in these cases was so strong that the language that was the result of this contact situation has been interpreted as a "mixed" language that is commonly referred to as "Hurro-Akkadian". This "mixed" language uses Akkadian as a base into which Hurrian features are inserted. Besides Nuzi and Alalaḫ, "Hurro-Akkadian" is attested in the textual material from the Syrian city Qatna. The discovered texts from this site were written in the second half of the fourteenth century BCE and show an intense mixing of Akkadian and Hurrian. Almost every Akkadian sentence contains Hurrian traits (Andrason and Vita 2015, 310). In some cases, these Hurrian traits are insertions of Hurrian verbs instead of expected Akkadian verbal forms or translations of Akkadian words into Hurrian. In these cases, the respective words are usually marked as being a translation by a specific cuneiform sign called "Glossenkeil", which is used to mark the transition, or better translation, from one language into another. Other Hurrian features include the marking of the subject on the verb by means of suffixes, which is common in Hurrian but unknown from Akkadian, where the subject is marked by prefixes, as in *immarkunu* "you (mp) see", where the subject is indicated by the pronominal suffix *–kunu*, while the normative Akkadian form would be *tammarā* (Andrason and Vita 2015, 312). Examples such as these show nicely how the variant of Akkadian used by native Hurrian speakers was intermixed with local Hurrian grammar and words. A similar phenomenon is known from the Levant during the same time, where Canaanite scribes used Akkadian as the main written idiom for diplomatic correspondences, and also intermixed a significant amount of their native Canaanite morphology, lexicon, and syntax into the Akkadian base language (see Rainey 1996). In these cases, it is not so much the core dialects of Akkadian that are affected by language contact, rather, its use outside of

Mesopotamia in areas where Akkadian was not the native language of the people who wrote it led to phenomena such as "mixed" languages, including Hurro-Akkadian and Canaano-Akkadian.

Akkadian and Aramaic

In the first millennium BCE, it is possible to detect the increasing influence of yet another language on Akkadian, namely Aramaic (see chap. 17). The first clear attestations for Arameans date to the end of the twelfth century BCE and originate in royal inscriptions by Tiglath-Pileser I, in which they are located in the area northwest of Babylonia. In these early texts, Arameans are generally depicted as hostile or disruptive elements (Frame 2013, 90–91). The Arameans, and with them their language, Aramaic, subsequently entered Mesopotamia and spread in use among the local population. By the late eighth/early seventh centuries BCE, Aramaic had become the second administrative language of Assyria. As for Babylonia, it is generally assumed that the royal administration had become bilingual by the sixth century BCE (Beaulieu 2013, 359). How exactly Aramaic rose to its predominance in Mesopotamia remains unclear. One factor certainly was the increased use of Aramaic as administrative language during the Neo Assyrian Empire, which might have started by the Assyrians taking over administrative practices from conquered Syrian areas. During Neo Assyrian times, significant Aramaic population groups were further deported from Syria and resettled in Assyria, which led to an increase in the Aramaic speaking population in Assyria itself (Gzella 2015, 107–108). Non-forced migrations of Arameans into Mesopotamia might equally have been a factor in the rise of Aramaic.

During the first half of the first millennium BCE, Aramaic thus had increasing and direct contact with Akkadian. The influence of Aramaic on Akkadian was considerate, so much so that it eventually resulted in language shift, that is, Akkadian died out as a spoken language around the fifth to fourth centuries BCE and was replaced by Aramaic. It is difficult to trace the exact process of this language shift or the spread of Aramaic in Mesopotamia in general since Aramaic was written on perishable materials, which have not been preserved. Most of the evidence for the use of Aramaic has thus been lost and there is no direct evidence for the Aramaic vernaculars and the extent to which they were spoken in Assyria and Babylonia during the first half of the first millennium BCE (Beaulieu 2013, 360). It is, however, possible to notice certain contact induced changes in the grammar of Neo and Late Babylonian that most likely go back to Aramaic influence. Besides attestations of Aramaic loanwords in NB and LB, which include semantic fields such as alphabetic writing, trade, cattle farming, and the military (Gzella 2015, 122), there are some grammatical changes that might go back to Aramaic influence. These grammatical changes include the form of the 1cp independent pronoun, which is *nīnu* in Babylonian, but that also appears in the form *anīnu* in NB and LB. The initial /a/ is most likely the result of an analogy with the Aramaic form of the pronoun *ʾănaḥnā*. Another feature is the appearance of a 3fs prefix *t-* on the preterite and durative, where normative Babylonian has *i-*, as in 3fs *taparras* instead of *iparras*. This shift from *i-* to *t-* is most likely influenced by Aramaic, which regularly has a *t*-prefix in the 3fs. Another feature that seems to be due to Aramaic influence is that the form *iprus* can be used as precative/jussive without the common Akkadian precative marker *l-* (as in Babylonian *liprus*). Again,

this type of use of the verbal form is normative in Aramaic and seems to have been taken over in Neo and Late Babylonian (Beaulieu 2013, 363–370). The influence of Aramaic thus went beyond loanwords and penetrated the grammatical structure of Akkadian, which indicates intensive and prolonged contact. The most significant influence of Aramaic on Akkadian, however, as mentioned above, was that it caused language shift. Aramaic gradually replaced Akkadian in Mesopotamia, leading to the death of Akkadian as a spoken language.

Sketch of Akkadian grammar

The following sketch of Akkadian grammar is designed to provide an overview of the main features of Akkadian. For a detailed description the reader should refer to the standard grammars such as von Soden (1995) and Huehnergard (1998).

Akkadian Phonology

The description of Akkadian phonology in this section is based on Old Babylonian, which is traditionally perceived as the "classic" stage of Akkadian.

Vowels

Akkadian distinguishes four vowel qualities and three lengths. The vowel qualities are /a/, /e/, /i/, and /u/, which can appear as short (*a*), long (commonly marked with a macron *ā*), and ultralong (marked with a circumflex *â*). While long and short vowels are inherited from Proto Semitic, ultralong vowels are the result of inner Akkadian developments, namely vowel contractions. The vowel /e/, which is phonemic, likewise represents an innovation in Akkadian. It emerged through various sound changes, the most important one of which is the coloring of *a* > *e* in the environment of the original gutturals /ḥ/, /ʿ/, and /ġ/, as in **baʿlum* > **beʿlum* > *bēlum* "lord". Another source for /e/, at least in the Babylonian dialect, is what is commonly referred to as the "Babylonian vowel harmony". This rule stipulates that an /a/-vowel that occurs in the same word as an /e/-vowel assimilates to /e/, as in *bēlātum* (Assyrian form) > *bēlētum* "ladies". Furthermore, the phoneme /i/ becomes /e/ before the consonants /r/ and /ḫ/, as in **milḫrum* > *meḫrum* "copy" (see also Huehnergard and Woods 2004, 232–233). For a summary of Akkadian vowels see Table 7.2.

Table 7.2 Akkadian vowels.

	Front	*Central*	*Back*
High	*i*		*u*
Mid		*e*	
Low		*a*	

Another important feature with regard to Akkadian vowels is the Akkadian vowel syncope rule. This rule states that the last short vowel in a sequence of two or more short vowels in open syllables is syncopated, as in *parisum* > *parsum*. This rule can be blocked around sonorants, specifically /l/ and /r/, where we get biforms such as *akalum* and *aklum* "food".

Consonants

Akkadian distinguishes 20 consonantal phonemes that are presented in Table 7.3.

The consonants marked as "emphatic" were most likely glottalized, that is a glottal stop was coarticulated together with the base phoneme, as in /tˀ/, /ᵗsˀ/, and /kˀ/. The phonemes given in parentheses among the dentals/alveolars reflect a more archaic pronunciation of the phonemes as affricates. The affricate pronunciation of these phonemes was gradually lost throughout Old Babylonian, first between vowels, then generally.

The Akkadian consonantal inventory differs significantly from what is commonly reconstructed for Proto Semitic. Proto Semitic had 29 consonantal phonemes. Akkadian lost nine of these original phonemes either through actual loss or mergers. The Proto Semitic guttural phonemes /ʾ/, /h/, /ḥ/, /ʿ/, and /ġ/ were lost – /ʾ/ first only in certain environments – most likely, as mentioned above, through Sumerian influence, which did not have these phonemes. Furthermore, the Proto Semitic interdentals **ð* and **θ* merged with /z/ and /š/ respectively. The Proto Semitic fricative lateral **ɬ* equally merged with /š/. Lastly, the emphatic phonemes **θʾ* (emphatic voiceless interdental), **ɬʾ* (emphatic voiceless lateral), and **ᵗsʾ* (emphatic voiceless dental/alveolar affricate) all merged into a single phoneme, /ṣ/.

Diphthongs

Akkadian had two diphthongs, **ay* and **aw*, which had contracted already at an early stage of the language. The diphthong **ay* contracted to /ē/ in Old Akkadian and Assyrian, and to /ī/ in Babylonian, while the diphthong **aw* contracted to /ū/ in all dialects.

Table 7.3 Akkadian consonantal inventory.

	Bilabial	*Dental/Alveolar*	*Palatal*	*Velar*	*Uvular*	*Glottal*
Stop						
Voiceless	*p*	*t*		*k*		*ʾ*
Voiced	*b*	*d*		*g*		
Emphatic		*ṭ*		*q*		
Fricative						
Voiceless		*s* (*ᵗs*)	*š*	*ḫ*		
Voiced		*z* (*ᵈz*)			*r*	
Emphatic		*ṣ* (*ᵗṣ*)				
Approximant	*w*	*l*	*y*			
Nasal	*m*	*n*				

Stress

Stress can only be reconstructed for Akkadian since there is no direct evidence for it in the writing system. It was most likely dependent on syllable structure, as can be deduced from, for example, the vowel syncope rule mentioned above. According to the common reconstruction, stress falls on the last syllable when it is closed and has a long or ultralong vowel (as in *idūk* "he killed") or when the last syllable ends in an ultralong vowel (*ibnû* "they built"). Otherwise, it falls on the rightmost non-final long syllable (either CVC or CV:), as in *ipárras*. If none of these conditions applies, stress falls on the first syllable (*nádin* "given").

Akkadian Morphology

The description of Akkadian morphology presented in the following sections is based on Old Babylonian and reflects the most basic forms of the language.

Nominal Morphology

The Akkadian noun is declined for two genders, three cases, three numbers, and three "states".

Gender

Akkadian has two genders, masculine and feminine. Masculine nouns are commonly unmarked, as in *šarrum* "king", while most feminine nouns are marked by either *–t* or *–at* (*šarratum* "queen", *bēltum* "lady"). The distribution of the two feminine endings is phonologically motivated: nouns ending in two consonants are marked by *–at*, all others are marked by *–t*. Some unmarked nouns are considered feminine, such as *ḫarrānum* "road" (fem.) or can be naturally feminine, such as *ummum* "mother". A few other unmarked nouns can be construed as both masculine and feminine, such as *urḫum* "road" (masc. and fem.).

Number

Akkadian has three numbers, singular, dual, and plural. The dual, however, is not fully productive any longer after the Old Akkadian period and is only preserved on nouns from Old Babylonian on. Both the dual and plural are marked externally by suffixing specific plural and dual markers, which are *–ān* (nom.) and *–īn* (obl.) for the dual,*–ū* (nom.), and *–ī* (obl.) for the masculine plural, and *–ātum* (nom.) and *–ātim* (obl.) for the feminine plural. Changes in the basic formation of the noun in the plural, that is internal or broken plurals, are only attested in very few cases, as in *aḫḫū* "brothers" from the singular *aḫum* and *abbū* "fathers" from the singular *abum*.

Case

Akkadian distinguishes three cases in the singular, a nominative, genitive, and accusative, and two in the dual and plural, a nominative and oblique. The cases are marked by short

vowels in the singular (nominative *–u*, genitive *–i*, accusative *–a*) on both masculine and feminine nouns. The dual and plural are marked with the markers provided in the previous paragraph, resulting in the following paradigm (Table 7.4):

Table 7.4 Akkadian nominal inflection.

	Masculine singular	*Feminine singular*
Nominative	*šarr-u-m*	*šarrat-u-m*
Genitive	*šarr-i-m*	*šarrat-i-m*
Accusative	*šarr-a-m*	*šarrat-a-m*
	Masculine dual	*Feminine dual*
Nominative	*šarr-ā-n*	*šarrat-ā-n*
Oblique	*šarr-ī-n*	*šarrat-ī-n*
	Masculine plural	*Feminine plural*
Nominative	*šarr-ū*	*šarrāt-u-m*
Oblique	*šarr-ī*	*šarrāt-i-m*

State

Lastly, Akkadian nouns distinguish three "states". The unbound state is marked by final *–m*, called *mimation*, in the singular and feminine plural, and by final *–n*, called *nunation*, in the dual, as given in the paradigm above. The unbound state is the basic and unmarked form of the noun.

The bound or construct state lacks mimation/nunation and case endings – the bound form of *šarrum* being *šar*, and that of *šarratum* being *šarrat*. In nouns that end in a consonant cluster, the cluster is either simplified when it consists of the same consonants (**šarr* > *šar*) or the vowel /i/ is added after the final cluster (**libb* > *libbi* "heart"). When a final consonant cluster consists of two different consonants, an anaptyctic vowel is inserted. In this case, the inserted vowel has the same quality as the vowel of the nominal base, that is **kalb* > *kalab* "dog", **šipr* > *šipir* "sending", **uzn* > *uzun* "ear". The bound form or construct state is used to express genitival relationships between two nouns or a noun and pronominal suffix. When two nouns are juxtaposed, the first noun appears in the bound form and the second noun follows in the genitive, as in *kalab šarrim* "the dog of the king". Pronominal suffixes are directly suffixed to the noun in the bound form, as in *kalabšu* "his dog", *šipirša* "her sending" (nom. and acc.), etc. The only exception are nouns in the genitive, which preserve the case vowel /i/ before pronominal suffixes, as in *ana kalbīšu* "for his dog".

The third state of Akkadian is the so-called "absolute" state. The absolute state resembles the construct in that it does not have mimation/nunation or case endings. In the feminine plural, it is attested as both *–ā* and *–āt*. The use of the absolute state is still not fully understood, although it seems that it functions like the accusative in other Semitic languages in many of its attestations, including frozen adverbial expressions (*zikar sinniš* "male female"), the expression of the vocative (*bēlet* "o lady!"), and its use for cardinal numbers (*šinā* "two") (see Hasselbach 2013, 313–315; 318–322).

Predicative Adjective

Besides the aforementioned three states, Akkadian has a nominal form that is used to express nominal predicates, commonly referred to as the "stative". This form can be based on either the verbal adjective or a substantive and is conjugated for person and number by suffixing person markers. In its essence, the stative, also sometimes called "conjugated predicative adjective", expresses the state that is the result of the meaning of a verbal root, as in *maṛṣāku* "I am sick" (or: "I am in the state of being sick") from the root *marāṣum* "to be sick". The form has no tense value and, in its most basic function, represents a verbless clause (Huehnergard and Woods 2004, 245). The paradigm of the stative is as presented in Table 7.5:

Table 7.5 Conjugation of the predicative verbal adjective.

	With verbal adjective	*With substantive*
3ms	*maruṣ*	*šar*
3fs	*marṣat*	*šarrat*
2ms	*marṣāta*	*šarrāta*
2fs	*marṣāti*	*šarrāti*
1cs	*marṣāku*	*šarrāku*
3mp	*marṣū*	*šarrū*
3fp	*marṣā*	*šarrā*
2mp	*marṣātunu*	*šarrātunu*
2fp	*marṣātina*	*šarrātina*
1cp	*marṣānu*	*šarrānu*

Attributive Adjectives

Attributive adjectives are declined like substantives and agree with their head noun in gender, number, and case, as in *šarrum dannum* "the strong king", *ana šarratim dannatim* "for the strong queen". The only difference to the inflection of substantives is found in the masculine plural, for which attributive adjectives have the suffix *–ūtum* (nom.)/ *-ūtim* (gen. and acc.), as in *šarrū dannūtum* "the strong kings".

Demonstrative function is usually expressed by demonstrative adjectives in Akkadian. Near deixis ("this") is expressed by *annûm* in Babylonian, while far deixis ("that") is expressed by *ullûm*, as in *šarratum annītum* "this queen" and *šarrū ullûtum* "those kings". These forms are inflected like attributive adjectives and follow the same agreement rules as the latter.

Adverbial –iš and -um

In addition to the three aforementioned cases, Akkadian has two adverbial morphemes that are suffixed to nouns, the terminative-adverbial ending *–iš* and the locative-adverbial *–um*. The ending *–iš* originally expresses direction toward an entity (*bītiš* "to the house"), but this function has been almost completely lost after the Old Akkadian period. In Old

Babylonian and later dialects, the suffix primarily marks adverbs (*damqiš* "well"). The locative ending *–um* primarily marks location (*qerbum* "in the midst/middle") and adverbs.

Pronouns

Independent Pronouns

Old Babylonian has three sets of independent pronouns that are distinguished for case: one set for the nominative, one that functions as both genitive and accusative, and an independent set for the dative (see Table 7.6):

Table 7.6 Old Babylonian independent pronouns.

	Nominative	*Genitive-accusative*	*Dative*
1cs	*anāku*	*yâti*	*yâšim*
2ms	*atta*	*kâti/kâta*	*kâšim*
2fs	*atti*	*kâti*	*kâšim*
3ms	*šū*	*šuāti*	*šuāšim*
3fs	*šī*	*šiāti*	*šiāšim*
1cp	*nīnu*	*niāti*	*niāšim*
2mp	*attunu*	*kunūti*	*kunūšim*
2fp	*attina*	*kināti*	*kināšim*
3mp	*šunu*	*šunūti*	*šunūšim*
3fp	*šina*	*šināti*	*šināšim*

In later dialects, the final /m/ of the dative pronouns is lost. The third person independent pronouns can also be used as anaphoric pronouns, that is, they can serve as far demonstratives, as in *awīlum šū* "that man".

Pronominal Suffixes

Besides the independent forms, Akkadian has three sets of pronominal suffixes that express

1. Possessive relationships (= genitive) and are suffixed to nouns (as in *kalabšu* "his dog")
2. The accusative, which are suffixed to verbs primarily indicating the direct object (*imḫuršu* "he received it"), and
3. The dative, which are equally attached to the verb (*alikniāšim* "come to us!").

For the forms of the pronominal suffixes in Old Babylonian see Table 7.7.

The genitive suffix *–ī* of the 1cs is attached to singular nouns in the nominative and accusative (*kalbī* "my dog" [nominative and accusative]), while the suffix *–ya* is attached after long vowels, including the genitive singular (*ana abīya* "for my father" [genitive]; *šarrūya* "my kings"). The forms of the 1cs accusative suffixes are combinations of the ventive morphemes *–am/-m/-nim* plus the 1cs suffix *–ni*. The /m/ of the ventive is

Table 7.7 Old Babylonian pronominal suffixes.

	Genitive	*Accusative*	*Dative*
1cs	*-ī/ -ya*	*-anni/ -nni /-ninni*	*-am/ -m/ -nim*
2ms	*-ka*	*-ka*	*-kum*
2fs	*-ki*	*-ki*	*-kim*
3ms	*-šu*	*-šu*	*-šum*
3fs	*-ša*	*-ši*	*-šim*
1cp	*-ni*	*-niāti*	*-niāšim*
2mp	*-kunu*	*-kunūti*	*-kunūšim*
2fp	*-kina*	*-kināti*	*-kināšim*
3mp	*-šunu*	*-šunūti*	*-šunūšim*
3fp	*-šina*	*-šināti*	*-šināšim*

assimilated to the following /n/ of the suffix. The distribution of the accusative forms follows that of the ventive: the suffix *–am* is suffixed to verbal forms ending in an original consonant, that is, verbal forms without vocalic suffixes. The form *–m* is suffixed to the 2fs, and *–nim* is attached to all other forms ending in a vowel, that is the 3mp, 3fp, 2cp.

Relative-Determinative Pronoun

Akkadian used to have a fully declined paradigm for the relative-determinative pronoun in Old Akkadian, however, after the Old Akkadian period, this has been reduced to the indeclinable determinative-relative pronoun *ša*. In the function of a determinative pronoun, *ša* means "the one of", as in *ša bābilim* "the one of Babylon" (Huehnergard and Woods 2004, 251). In other cases, *ša* can stand in apposition to a noun and is then translated simply as "of". The noun that follows *ša* in these cases is always in the genitive, as in *kalbum ša ekallim* "the dog of the palace". More commonly, the pronoun introduces relative clauses, as in *bītam ša ibnû īmur* "he saw the house he had built".

Verbal Morphology

Akkadian has three verbal conjugations, the preterite (*iprus*), durative (*iparras*), and perfect (*iptaras*). These three conjugations are marked by prefixes that indicate person and suffixes that mark gender and number. The prefixes and suffixes are the same for each conjugation. The preterite expresses past tense, usually a punctual and/or completed action, as in *īmur* "he saw". The durative, which is characterized by the doubling of the second radical, most frequently corresponds to the English present and future. It also expresses imperfective connotations, that is, it can be used to describe durative or habitual actions in the past and actions that are circumstantial, that is co-occurring with the main verb, in the past. The perfect is an innovative form in Akkadian that is not known from other Semitic languages. It is characterized by infixing /t/ after the first root letter. Functionally, it roughly corresponds to the English present perfect, but after Old Babylonian, replaces the preterite in its past-marking function in main clauses (Kouwenberg 2010, 153-155).

The paradigm of the three conjugations is as follows in Old Babylonian (Table 7.8):

Table 7.8 Conjugation of finite verbal forms.

	Preterite	*Durative*	*Perfect*
3ms	*iprus*	*iparras*	*iptaras*
3fs	*iprus*	*iparras*	*iptaras*
2ms	*taprus*	*taparras*	*taptaras*
2fs	*taprusī*	*taparrasī*	*taptarsī*
1cs	*aprus*	*aparras*	*aptaras*
3mp	*iprusū*	*iparrasū*	*iptarsū*
3fp	*iprusā*	*iparrasā*	*iptarsā*
2mp	*taprusā*	*taparrasā*	*taptarsā*
2fp	*taprusā*	*taparrasā*	*taptarsā*
1cp	*niprus*	*niparras*	*niptaras*

Table 7.9 Old Babylonian imperative.

ms	*purus*	mp	*pursā*
fs	*pursī*	fp	*pursā*

Table 7.10 Old Babylonian precative.

3ms	*liprus*	3mp	*liprusū*
3fs	*liprus*	3fp	*liprusā*
1cs	*luprus*	1cp	*i niprus*

In addition, Akkadian has an imperative and what is commonly referred to as a precative. The imperative, as expected, only occurs in the second person and has the forms given in Table 7.9.

The precative expresses wishes and indirect commands (*liškun* "may he place") and primarily occurs in the first and third persons. It is based on the preterite to which the morpheme *lV-* is prefixed. The quality of the vowel after *l-* depends on person; it is /i/in the third persons and /u/ in the 1cs. In the 1cp, the precative prefix is simple *i* (see Table 7.10).

Negative commands are expressed by the negative particle *lā* followed by the durative, as in *lā tabanni* "do not build!". The negative counterpart of the precative is formed by prefixing the negative particle *ayy-* to the preterite, as in *ayy-ibni* "may he not build". Forms that start with a consonant are negated by *ē*, as in *ē tabni* "you may not build".

The infinitive has a single form in Akkadian, *parāsum*, which is declined for case like nouns. The active participle, which is often used in substantivized function, has the form *pārisum*.

Subordinate Marker

All verbal forms that occur in a subordinate clause are marked by suffixed *–u* unless they have a vocalic suffix marking gender or number (that is the 2fs, 3mp, 3fp, 2mp, 2fp). The latter forms are unmarked in subordinate clauses, as in *awīlam ša māršu išpuru īmur*

"he saw the man who had sent his son" versus *šarrī ša wardīšunu išpurū īmur* "he saw the kings who had sent their servants".

Ventive

Another suffix that can be suffixed to verbs is the so-called ventive. The ventive marks direction toward the speaker and is thus mostly found with motion verbs, as in *illik* "he went" versus *illikam* "he came". It has the forms *–am*, *-m*, and *–nim*, which are attached to verbs in the distribution mentioned above under the attachment of dative suffixes.

Derived Stems

The verbal forms discussed so far all belong to the basic or G-stem (from German "Grundstamm") of the Akkadian verbal system, which expresses the basic meaning of a given verbal root. In addition, Akkadian has a number of derived stems, which are characterized either by prefixing or infixing certain elements, and which alter the basic meaning of a verbal root. The most important of these derived stems are the following.

The D-stem (from German "Doppelungsstamm") is morphologically characterized by the doubling of the second radical and the prefix vowel /u/. Durative and preterite are distinguished by vowel Ablaut, with the preterite being marked by /i/ and the durative by /a/. The consonantal prefixes and vocalic suffixes that mark person, gender, and number, are the same as in the G-stem (see Table 7.11).

The D-stem primarily expresses factitive function (*dummuqum* "to make good" from G *damāqum* "to be good") and verbal plurality (D *purrurum* "to scatter" from G "to fall apart") (Kouwenberg 2010, 272–279).

The Š-stem, which is marked by prefixed *š(V)*, expresses the causative of the G-stem (*ušamqit* "he caused someone to fall" from G *maqātum* "to fall") (see Table 7.11).

The N-stem primarily serves as the passive of the G-stem (*iššebir* "it was broken" from G *šebērum* "to break"). It is characterized by prefixed /n/, which is assimilated to a following consonant (see Table 7.11).

Akkadian further has a set of stems marked by infixed /t/ that can be formed from most of the stems described so far, called the Gt, Dt, and Št.

The Gt expresses reciprocal meaning or reflexive meaning in relation to the G-stem verb (*mitḫuṣum* "to strike each other"; *pištšušum* "to anoint oneself"). It can also denote separative function when used with motion verbs (*atlukum* "to go away").

Table 7.11 Basic forms of the D-, Š- and N-stems.

	D-stem	*Š-stem*	*N-stem*
Preterite	*uparris*	*ušapris*	*ipparis*
Durative	*uparras*	*ušapras*	*ipparras*
Perfect	*uptarris*	*uštapris*	*ittapras*
Imperative	*purris*	*šupris*	*napris*
Infinitive	*purrusum*	*šuprusum*	*naprusum*
Participle	*muparrisum*	*mušaprisum*	*mupparisum*

Table 7.12 Akkadian t-stems.

	Gt	*Dt*	*Št*$_1$	*Št*$_2$
Preterite	*iptaras*	*uptarris*	*uštapris*	*uštapris*
Durative	*iptarras*	*uptarras*	*uštapras*	*uštaparras*
Perfect	*iptatras*	*uptatarris*	*uštatapris*	*uštatapris*
Imperative	*pitras*	*putarris*	*šutapris*	*šutapris*
Infinitive	*pitrusum*	*putarrusum*	*šutaprusum*	*šutaprusum*
Participle	*muptarisum*	*muptarrisum*	*muštaprisum*	*muštaprisum*

Table 7.13 Akkadian tan-/tn-stems.

	Gtn	*Dtn*	*Štn*	*Ntn*
Preterite	*iptarras*	*uptarris*	*uštapris*	*ittapras*
Durative	*iptanarras*	*uptanarras*	*uštanapras*	*ittanapras*
Perfect	*iptatarras*	*uptatarris*	*uštatapris*	*ittatapras*
Imperative	*pitarras*	*putarris*	*šutapris*	*itapras*
Infinitive	*pitarrusum*	*putarrusum*	*šutaprusum*	*itaprusum*
Participle	*muptarrisum*	*muptarrisum*	*muštaprisum*	*muttaprisum*

The Dt and Št primarily express the passive of the D and Š-stems respectively. The Š actually has two *t*-stems. Besides the Št$_1$ that serves as the passive of the Š, the Št$_2$, which is only distinguishable morphologically in the durative, expresses the reflexive and passive of the Š and serves as causative for the Gt and N. For the basic forms of the *t*-stems see Table 7.12.

Lastly, Akkadian has a set of stems that are characterized by infixed /tan/, although this morpheme is only fully preserved in the durative. The *tan-* or *tn*-stems can be formed from each of the basic stems, that is, there is a Gtn, Dtn, Štn, and Ntn (see Table 7.13). The *tan*-stems mark iterativity and habitual action, as in *ištanappar* "he is sending continuously".

Syntax

The following represents just a small sample of syntactic constructions and sentence types in Akkadian. For a more detailed overview of Akkadian clause types see von Soden (1995) and Huehnergard and Woods (2004, 263–276).

Word Order

The basic Akkadian word order in verbal clauses is Subject (S) Object (O) Verb (V), as in *šarrum wardam išpur* "the king sent a servant". As mentioned above, it is commonly assumed that this word order is borrowed from Sumerian since classical Semitic languages more commonly exhibit the word order VSO. In addition, Akkadian does not exhibit the typical structure of SOV languages, which most often have modifier-head order, that is, attributive adjectives, relative clauses etc. precede the noun they modify. Akkadian has

head-modifier order, with attributive adjectives etc. following the head noun, which is typical for VSO and SVO languages, which confirms that the order SOV is not original to the language.

In verbless clauses, the usual word order is Subject (S) Predicate (P), as in *Ḫammurapi šarrum dannum* "Hammurapi is a strong king". The opposite order P-S, however, is found when the subject consists of a personal pronoun, as in *šarrum dannum šū* "he is a strong king" (Huehnergard 1986).

The typical word order can be changed for two main discourse functions: topicalization and focus. Topicalization introduces a new topic into the discourse, while focus puts special emphasis on a sentence element. The most common way to achieve these two discourse functions is by placing the topicalized or focused noun or noun phrase at the beginning of the clause. In this case, the fronted noun usually occurs in the nominative, independent of its function in the main clause, and is followed by a complete sentence. Because of the fronted nominative, this construction is also known as "nominative absolute", or, more commonly, as "casus pendens". Examples include: *šarrum māršu imraṣ* "as for the king, his son fell ill" (fronted noun functions as genitive in main clause); *sinništum aḫūka iṣbassi* "as for the woman, your brother seized her" (fronted noun functions as accusative in main clause); *anāku šarram aṭṭul* "as for me, I saw the king" (fronted noun is in nominative in main clause).

Agreement

Akkadian exhibits strict agreement. This means that attributive adjectives agree with the noun they modify in gender, number, and case, and verbal predicates agree with the subject in gender and number. The only exception after the Old Akkadian period is the dual. Since the verb lost dual inflection, nouns in the dual are construed as feminine plural, even when the noun designates male human beings, as in *šarrān imqutā* "the two kings fell".

Relative Clauses

Relative clauses are commonly introduced by the indeclinable relative pronoun *ša*. Verbs in relative clauses, and in subordinate clauses in general, are marked by final *–u* in Babylonian when the verb form ends in an original consonant, as in *ana mārim ša išpuru* "for the son he had sent". Verbs that end in a gender or number marker (2fs, 3mp, 3fp, 2p) are not marked in subordinate clauses in Babylonian: *mārū ša išpurū* "the sons they had sent".

The relative pronoun *ša* can also be used independently, that is, without an antecedent. In this case, it designates "the one who" and can stand for the subject, direct, and indirect object of the main verb (Huehnergard and Woods 2004, 272): *ša wardam iṣbatu imūt* "the one who had taken the servant died" (subject); *ša iḫliqu iṣbat* "he seized the one who had fled" (direct object).

In some rare cases, relative clauses are construed without *ša* and follow a noun in the bound state instead, as in *bīt ibnú* "the house he built". This construction is rare in Old Babylonian and almost unknown in Assyrian and later Babylonian dialects.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

Eblaite

Amalia Catagnoti

Introduction

Eblaite is a Semitic language attested in cuneiform texts of the twenty-fourth century BCE that were found at Ebla (modern Tell Mardikh in Syria). This urban center first flourished during the Early-Dynastic IIIb period (2600–2300 BCE). At the end of this period a fire destroyed the royal palace (Palace G).

Excavations in the royal Palace G have yielded about 17 000 inventory numbers, among them tablets, fragments and chips. We can assume that there were originally at least about 4000 or 5000 tablets.

Eblaite is among the oldest known Semitic languages. It belongs to a group of languages that also includes Akkadian from Mesopotamia and that can be defined as Northern Early Semitic (Tonietti 2017). During the third millennium, Eblaite was most likely spoken not only in Ebla itself, but also in the urban centers of upper northern Syria, roughly the area around Aleppo.

The Ebla Palace G cuneiform texts include all the main textual typologies (administrative accounts, chancery documents, lexical lists, literary texts), except for royal inscriptions (Archi 2003; Matthiae 2013). The main group is comprised of local texts, the majority of which are documents that refer to events in Ebla itself, or in neighboring areas that were of interest for the Eblaite elite during the lifespan of the archives. There are a few thousand economic texts, but also rituals, letters, and documents of political content (treaties, royal ordinances etc., published in ARET XI, XIII, XVI and XVIII). These documents give us important quantitative and qualitative information on the economic, political, and social situation of the Ebla kingdom and of the Syrian kingdoms in general. A smaller group is comprised of texts belonging to the Mesopotamian tradition. Among them there

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are texts of religious content (Sumerian incantations, but also Semitic compositions of literary form like hymns to the gods, published in ARET V), and lexical lists (Sumerian lists belonging both to the Uruk and Fara traditions, published in MEE 3 and 15). Noteworthy is further the Sumerian–Eblaite bilingual lexical list (MEE 4) which occupies a special place between the texts of the local and Mesopotamian traditions. The sources of the bilingual lexical list did not belong to the local tradition, but they were largely reworked, most probably in Ebla. They list Sumerian terms that are often translated (or glossed) with local Semitic terms, and are organized according to the acrographic principle, whereby Sumerian terms are grouped according to the first sign used to write them. In general, all the texts of the Mesopotamian tradition elaborated in Ebla allow a glimpse into the practices of the scribes of the Palace G. The number of these scribes appears to be particularly low in comparison to that of the great Mesopotamian centers of the third millennium. Lastly, it should be noted that there are also some local literary texts, such as Semitic incantations which mention Syrian gods and religious practices (ARET V).

The graphic system used in Ebla is a type of mid-third millennium cuneiform, similar to that found in Mesopotamia (from Kish in the north to various Sumerian sites in the south) and in eastern Syria, at Mari (modern Tell Hariri) and Nabada (modern Tell Beydar), with some distinctive differences (e.g. the value ru_{12} of the sign EN).

The terms used in the Eblaite cuneiform texts were written using both syllabograms and logograms. The syllabograms were normally used to denote terms in the local Semitic language, including proper nouns and common nouns, pronouns, adjectives, prepositions, conjunctions, adverbs and conjugated or declined verbal forms.

Some peculiarities distinguish the Eblaite syllabary from the contemporary Semitic syllabaries of Mesopotamia (Catagnoti 2012, 5–42, in particular see pp. 40–42 for the notation of /l, r/). Common features include the plurality of readings for single signs and the plurality of phonetic values for individual readings. The writing does not distinguish among voiceless, voiced and emphatic consonants, except some cases that show the ability of the Eblaite scribes in attempting to adapt the writing to their own language (e.g. the sign GU, with the syllabic value *ǧu*, to represent the phoneme /q/, is distinguished from GÚ, with the syllabic value *ǧú*, to represent the phonemes /g/ and /k/).

As always in documents written by Semitophone scribes, the Ebla texts contain a large number of Semitic terms that were noted down with what was considered to be their Sumerian equivalents. The Eblaite scribes were familiar with in both Semitic and Sumerian texts originating from distant Mesopotamian areas (for example sign-lists and word-lists also found in Fara and Abū Ṣalābiḫ). The use of Sumerograms was also extended to frequently used words, e.g. en "king", ninda "bread". As has been noted for Sargonic Akkadian (Hasselbach 2005, 28 n. 7), the Sumerograms used in Ebla do not necessarily coincide with the contemporary Sumerian terms, as can be seen in the use of dumu-nita, "son", instead of the Sumerian dumu. Pluralization of Sumerograms was done by duplicating the word (dumu-mí-dumu-mí "daughters"). Rarer, but equally attested, are the Semitograms. Some can be defined as Akkadograms, that is writings that despite their Semitic aspect, were treated as logograms and not as syllabically written terms. Some Semitograms end with a genitive inflection (*bu-di* "pin"), others end without inflection (*li-im* "clan"), and still others with the nominative ending (*ma-lik-tum* "queen"). All of these Semitograms can have a doubled form in the plural, thus they are treated as common Sumerograms (Catagnoti 2017).

The majority of the Ebla texts documents how the local Semitic language was rendered by the Semitophone scribes according to their own conventions.

In addition to their own syllabary, the Ebla texts document the existence of two other scribal schools, one from Mari and the other from the northern area (Fronzaroli 2014, Fronzaroli 2017a). The Mari syllabary probably belongs to the "Kish Civilization" (Gelb 1992, 150–151, 195–202; Fronzaroli 2014). In the North, on the other hand, the onomasticon documents the presence of different elements, possibly of Hurrian origin, in personal names of Nagar and in personal names of *Ar-mi*^{ki} and DU-*lu*^{ki} that may reflect an older system which was less suitable for Semitic phonetics (Catagnoti 1998, 62; Catagnoti 2010). Furthermore, Eblaite is distinct from Amorite, although an archaic phase of the latter can probably be traced in some personal names (Bonechi 1991, 71–73; Catagnoti 2005; 148) referring to people from *Ib-al*$_6^{ki}$ and *Ma-nu-wa-at*^{ki} in the texts of Palace G.

A few cuneiform texts recovered at Tell Mardikh – a dedicatory inscription on the statue of the Ebla king Yibbiṭ-Lim dated to the twentieth century BCE, and some texts dated to the seventeenth century BCE – illustrate later periods than that of Palace G. The paleography and syllabary of these texts demonstrate a clear discontinuity from previous traditions, and the latter group can be assimilated to those used during the same period in Mari and Alalakh VII (Tell Atchana).

Sketch of Eblaite Grammar

The following is only a sketch of the Eblaite grammar, for a detailed description the reader should refer to Catagnoti (2012).

Eblaite Phonology

Despite the difficulties posed by cuneiform writing, which was imported into northern Syria from Mesopotamia, the analysis of the writings preserved in the texts allows us to recognize, with sufficient certainty, the vocalic and consonantal phonemes known to the scribes.

Vowels

Eblaite, unlike Sargonic Akkadian, has three vowel qualities and two lengths. The vowel qualities are /a/, /i/, /u/, which can be distinguished in short (*a*) and long (*ā*). The vowel *e* only appears as an allophone of /a/, where /ḥ/ can cause an optional change of the latter. It is also possible, but not certain, that the result of the contraction of the diphthong /ay/, which could occur at a phonetic level, was *ē*. For a summary of Eblaite vowels see Table 8.1.

In adjectives, including predicative adjectives, the syncope of the last short vowel in a sequence of two or more short vowels in open syllable does not normally occur. It is indicated, however, in the forms of the imperative (as in **milik-am* > *milkam* "decide!") and in some forms of the prefix-conjugation (**ʾusir-am* > *ʾusram* "I requested urgently").

Table 8.1 Eblaite vowels.

	Front	*Central*	*Back*
High	i		u
Low		a	

Table 8.2 Eblaite consonantal inventory.

	Bilabial	*Interdental*	*Dental/ Alveolar*	*Palatal*	*Velar*	*Pharyngeal*	*Uvular*	*Glottal*
Stop								
Voiceless	p		t		k			ʾ
Voiced	b		d		g			
Emphatic			ṭ		q			
Fricative								
Voiceless		t̲	s		ḫ	ḥ		h
Voiced		d̲			ġ	ʿ	r	
Affricate								
Voiceless		ᵗs						
Voiced		ᵈz						
Emphatic		ᵗṣ						
Approximant	w	l		y				
Nasal	m	n						

A feature of the phonetic realization is the extensive use of vowel harmony, noted frequently in writing, that is the assimilation of an unaccented vowel in open syllable to the following vowel, as in *rāpudūnuma* "our raiders" for **rāpidūnuma*.

Consonants

Eblaite distinguishes 26 consonantal phonemes that are presented in Table 8.2.

The emphatic consonants were probably glottalized — a glottal stop was co-articulated together with the base phoneme, as in /tʾ/, /ᵗsʾ/, and /kʾ/. The phonetic realization of the consonant indicated as /s/, or at least of one of its allophones, was probably a lateral affricate [ɬ]. The emphatic voiceless interdental phoneme **ṯ̲ʾ*, and the emphatic voiceless lateral phoneme **ɬʾ* were merged with /ᵗṣ/ (/ᵗsʾ/).

Diphthongs

Eblaite had two diphthongs /aw/ and /ay/, which were usually preserved. Contracted forms alternating with non-contracted forms appear in the different sources of the Ebla bilingual lexical list. In the chancery texts contracted forms seem to be preferred for the construct state and for the absolute state (*yawmū* "days", *yūm ʿatiq* "in the past").

Stress

There is no direct evidence for stress in the Eblaite writing system. We can deduce that it probably depended on syllable structure from the above mentioned cases of syncope. As a working hypothesis we can propose that, like in Akkadian, stress either fell on the last syllable when it was closed and had a long vowel (as in *yiṯūb* "he hesitated"), and when it ended in a long vowel resulting from a contraction (*yinassū* "they bring", from **yinassiʾū*), or it fell on the non-final long syllable, as in *yimáḫḫar*. In all the other cases stress fell on the first syllable (*máḫir*).

Eblaite Morphology

The following description of Eblaite morphology is based almost exclusively on chancery texts, which are the only ones that preserve numerous phonetic spellings. The sources of the bilingual lexical list are used for some nominal forms of the verb.

Nominal Morphology

The Eblaite noun is declined for two genders, three cases, three numbers, and three states.

Gender

Eblaite distinguishes two grammatical genders: masculine and feminine. Masculine nouns are unmarked, as in *malkum* "king", while feminine nouns are marked by the endings *-t-* or *-at-* (*malkatum* "queen", *mulabbistum* "she who provides the garments"). Phonology determines the distribution of the two feminine endings: nouns that end in two consonants are marked by *-at*, whereas all other nouns are marked by *-t*. There are nouns that are naturally feminine, such as *ʾummum* "mother", and other unmarked nouns that are also considered feminine, such as the nouns that represent paired body parts (*qātum* "hand"). There are some other unmarked nouns that can be construed as both masculine and feminine, such as *yawmum* "day".

Number

Eblaite has three numbers: singular, dual, and plural. The dual occurs regularly in the chancery texts, in the bilingual lexical list, and in the literary texts. The dual and plural are marked by specific endings, which are *-ān* (nom.) and *-ayn* (obl.) for the dual, *-ū* (nom.) and *-ī* (obl.) for the masculine plural, and *-ātum* (nom.) and *-ātim* (obl.) for the feminine plural. There is no clear evidence of changes in the basic formation of the noun in the plural (internal or broken plurals) in the available documentation. Such a change is instead attested for the dual construct state in a ritual text as in *ʾabahay-sumayn* "(The two thrones) of their two fathers" from the singular *ʾabum*.

Case

Eblaite has three cases – nominative, genitive, and accusative – in the singular, and two cases –nominative and oblique – in the dual and plural. In the singular the cases are marked by short vowels (nominative *-u*, genitive *-i*, accusative *-a*) on both masculine and feminine nouns. The dual and plural are marked with the ending markers provided in the previous paragraph. The case endings are all attested except for the nominative and oblique feminine dual, as shown in the following paradigm (Table 8.3).

State

Eblaite distinguishes three states: unbound, bound (or construct), and absolute state.

The unbound state is the basic and unmarked form of the noun. The unbound state is marked by final a *-m*, called *mimation*, in the singular and feminine plural, and by a final *-n*, called *nunation*, in the dual.

The bound state lacks mimation/nunation and case endings (as in *lisān*, bound form of *lisānum* "tongue"). In nouns that end in a consonant cluster, when the consonant cluster is formed by two different consonants, an anaptyctic vowel is inserted. In this case, the inserted vowel has the same quality as the vowel of the nominal base, as in **ṣarḥ* > *ṣaraḥ* "top (of a building)", **pusq* > *pusuq* "scarcity, need". In the construct state when two nouns are juxtaposed, the first noun appears in the bound form and the second noun follows in the genitive, as in *ṣaraḥ baytim* "the upper part of the house". Pronominal suffixes are directly suffixed to the noun in the bound form, as in *wattarsunu* "their substitute". The only exception are nouns in the genitive, which preserve the case vowel /i/ before pronominal suffixes, as in *ʿal bīṯisu* "on its availability".

The third state of Eblaite is the absolute state. It resembles the construct state in that it does not have mimation/nunation or case endings. The absolute state is attested in the names of cardinal numbers and measurements, which are present both in administrative and chancery texts (as in *miʾat* "hundred", *kubār* "(a unit of measurement for grains)"), as well as in adverbial expressions (as in *wahad* "individually, alone", *ripis* "largely") and in some temporal expressions (as in *sanat qadim* "the previous year").

Table 8.3 Eblaite inflection of the noun.

	Masculine singular	*Feminine singular*
Nominative	*malk-u-m*	*malkat-u-m*
Genitive	*malk-i-m*	*malkat-i-m*
Accusative	*malk-a-m*	*malkat-a-m*
	Masculine dual	*Feminine dual*
Nominative	*malk-ā-n*	–
Oblique	*malk-ay-n*	–
	Masculine plural	*Feminine plural*
Nominative	*malk-ū*	*malkāt-u-m*
Oblique	*malk-ī*	*malkāt-i-m*

Predicative Adjective

So far, the predicative adjective ("stative") is attested with a verbal adjective or a participle as its base and is conjugated for person and number by suffixing personal endings. The stative expresses the state that is the result of the meaning of a verbal root, as in *maḫir* "it is received" ("it is in the state of being received") from *maḫārum* "to receive". The attested forms of the stative are presented in Table 8.4.

Attributive Adjective

Attributive adjectives are declined like substantives and agree with their head noun in gender, number, and case, as in *sabaʿtum ʾaḫirtum* "final week". The only difference from the inflection of substantives is in the masculine plural, where the attributive adjective has the suffix *-ūtum*, as in *mawū ḫammūtum* "hot water" (the oblique *-ūtim* is not yet attested).

Endings -is and -um

Besides the three aforementioned cases, Eblaite has two morphemes that are indifferent to the gender and number suffixes used on nouns, the terminative ending *-is* and the locative *-um*. The ending *-is* originally expresses direction or destination of goods and people, as in *baytis PN* "toward the house of PN", *qabāris* "for burial". The same suffix is also employed as a formative element of adverbs, as in *maʾdis* "greatly". The locative ending *-um* is attested in some prepositions (as *wastum* "from, with") and as the ending of a paronomastic infinitive (*qatturum yuqattarāy* "certainly they (du.) will make the smoke rise").

Pronouns

Independent Pronouns

Eblaite has three sets of independent pronouns that are distinguished for case: one set for the nominative, one that functions as both genitive and accusative, and one set for the dative. The attested forms are presented in Table 8.5.

Independent pronouns in the third person can also be used as anaphoric pronouns, which means that they can serve as far demonstratives, as in *in yawmim suwāti* "in that day".

Table 8.4 Eblaite predicative adjective.

	Singular	*Dual*	*Plural*
3m	*maḫir*	*maḫiray*	*maḫirū*
3f	*maḫirat*	–	*maḫirā*
2m	–	–	*maḫirātunu*
2f	–	–	–
1c	*maḫirāk*	–	–

Table 8.5 Eblaite independent pronouns.

	Nominative	*Genitive–accusative*	*Dative*
1cs	*ʾanʾā*	–	–
2ms	*ʾanta*	*kuwāti*	*kuwāsim*
2fs	–	–	
3ms	*su-wa*	*suwāti*	*suwāsim*
3fs	*siya*		
1cp	–	*niāti*	*niāsim*
2mp	*ʾantanu*		–
2fp	–		–
3mp	*sunu*	*sunūt* (?)	–
3fp	–	–	–

Pronominal Suffixes

Beside the independent forms, Eblaite has three sets of pronominal suffixes. They can express 1. possessive relationships (= genitive) and are suffixed to nouns (as in *baytsu* "his house"); 2. the accusative and are suffixed to verbs and mainly indicate the direct object (as in *yisʾalsu* "he asked him"); 3. the dative and are also suffixed to the verb (as in *yiʾkulēsum* "they (du.) have eaten from him"). The dual pronominal suffix and the vocalization of the accusative singular and of the genitive plural, as well as the nominative singular independent pronouns, are different from Sargonic Akkadian or Old Babylonian. In particular, see Fronzaroli 2010 for the dual forms and Fronzaroli 2017b for the first person. The forms attested are presented in Table 8.6.

Table 8.6 Eblaite pronominal suffixes.

	Genitive	*Accusative*	*Dative*
1cs	*-ī/-ya*	*-nu*	-
2ms	*-ka/-k*	*-ka*	*-kum*
2fs	*-ki*	*-ki*	-
3ms	*-su/-s*	*-su*	*-sum*
3fs	*-sa/s*	*-si*	*-sim*
1cd	*-nayn/neyn/nēn*		
2cd	*-kumayn*	–	*-kumayn*
3cd	*-sumayn*	*-sumayn*	–
1cp	*-nu*	*-niāti*	*-niāsim*
2mp	*-kunu*	–	–
2fp	–	–	–
3mp	*-sunu/-snu*	*-sunu*	–
3fp	*-sina*	*-sinat*	–

The genitive suffix *-ī* of the 1cs is used after a consonant (*balī* "without me"), while the suffix *-ya* is used after a diphthong or a long vowel (*wastayya* "with me").

Relative-Determinative Pronoun

Eblaite has a relative-determinative pronoun declined for gender, number and case. The forms attested are presented in Table 8.7:

Table 8.7 Eblaite relative-determinative pronoun.

	Nominative	*Genitive*	*Accusative*
ms	ṯu	ṯi	ṯa
fs	ṯātu	ṯāti	–
cd	–		ṯay
mp	–		ṯūti
fp	ṯātu		ṯāti

When performing the function of a determinative pronoun, these forms mean "the one of", as in *sin ṯāti GN* "for those of GN". Generally, the pronoun introduces relative clauses and it agrees with its head noun in gender, number, and case, as in *suwa miliknayn ṯu namlikam* "that is our (du.) decision which we (du.) had decided".

Verbal Morphology

Eblaite has three verbal conjugations, the preterite (*yimḫur*), durative (*yimaḫḫar*), and perfect (*yimtaḫar*), that are marked by prefixes to indicate person and suffixes to indicate gender and number. The prefixes and suffixes are the same for each conjugation. The preterite expresses past tense, usually a punctual and/or completed action, as in *yiš'al* "he asked". The durative, in which the second radical is doubled, is used similarly to Akkadian and usually corresponds to the English present and future. The perfect is an innovative form in Northern Early Semitic that is not known from other Semitic languages. It is characterized by infixing /t/ after the first root letter, and is similar to the English present perfect.

The forms attested for the three conjugations in Eblaite are presented in Table 8.8.

Eblaite has an imperative and a precative. The imperative, which only occurs in the second person, is attested only in three forms (Table 8.9).

The precative expresses wishes and indirect commands (*luytqunū* "may they be well") and is based on the preterite to which the particle *lu* (also attested with emphatic particle, *luma*) is prefixed. So far, in Eblaite, the precative is attested only in the 3ms, 3mp, and 1cs. In the phonetic realization, the particle *lu* connected with the initial vowel of the verbal form in the 3ms, and 3mp, while in the 1st person singular the vowel of the particle is contracted to /ā/ (Table 8.10).

Negative commands are expressed by the negative particle *lā* followed by the durative (*lā ʾasapparam* "I will not have to write"). The negative counterpart of the precative is

Table 8.8 Conjugation of the strong verb in Eblaite.

	Preterite	*Durative*	*Perfect*
3ms	*yimḫur*	*yimaḫḫar*	*yimtaḫar*
3fs	*tamḫur* (*timḫur*)	*tamaḫḫar*	*tamtaḫar* (*timtaḫar*)
2ms	*tamḫur* (*timḫur*)	*tamaḫḫar*	
2fs	–	–	
1cs	*ʾamḫur*	*ʾamaḫḫar*	*ʾamtaḫar*
3cd	*yimḫuray* (*timḫuray*)		*yimtaḫaray*
2cd	–	–	–
1cd	*namḫur*	*namaḫḫar*	–
3mp	*yimḫurū* (*timḫurū*)	*yimaḫḫarū* (*timaḫḫarū*)	*yimtaḫrū*
3fp	*yimḫurū*	*yimaḫḫarā*	–
2cp	–	–	–
1cp	*nimḫur*	*nimaḫḫar*	*nimtaḫar*

Table 8.9 Eblaite imperative.

ms	*muḫur*	cd	*muḫuray*	cp	*muḫurū*

Table 8.10 Eblaite precative.

3ms	*luymḫur*	3mp	*luyimḫurū*
1cs	*lāmḫur*	1cp	–

formed by prefixing the negative particle *ʾay* to the preterite, as in *ʾay yiṭṭabaḫ* "may he not keep on doing carnage".

In Eblaite, the infinitive has a single form, *maḫārum*, which is declined for case like nouns. Other patterns are attested in the bilingual lexical list (Krebernik 1996, 239), although they are not present in the chancery texts that better reflect the Eblaite language. The infinitive is attested with the locative ending *-um*, and with the terminative ending *-is*.

The active participle, often used in substantivized function, has the form *māḫirum*.

Subordinate Marker

The verbal forms that occur in a subordinate clause are marked by suffixed *-u* except for the forms that have a vocalic suffix, which are unmarked.

Ventive

Another suffix that can be attached to verbs is the so-called ventive. The use of the ventive in Eblaite appears to be similar to Akkadian, in that the ventive primarily expresses

direction toward the speaker and is thus mostly found with motion verbs, as in *yihtalkam* "he came" from the verb *halākum* "to go". In Eblaite the only form of the ventive suffix attested so far is *-am*.

Derived Stems

The verbal forms discussed above belong to the basic or G-stem of the Eblaite verbal system, which is known to express the basic meaning of a given verbal root. In Eblaite, there are also a number of derived stems; they are characterized either by prefixing or infixing certain elements that alter the basic meaning of a verbal root. Among these derived stems the most important are: the D-stem, S-stem and N-stem.

The D-stem primarily expresses factitive function (*nahhulum* "to make somebody lie" from G *nahālum* "to lie") and verbal plurality (*sallumum* "to deliver fully" from G *salāmum* "to be completed"). The D-stem is morphologically characterized by the doubling of the second radical and the prefixed vowel /u/. Durative and preterite are distinguished by vowel Ablaut, with the preterite being marked by /i/ and the durative by /a/. The consonantal prefixes and vocalic suffixes that mark person, gender, and number, are the same as in the G-stem (see Table 8.11).

The S-stem expresses the causative of the G-stem (*saʾḫuḏum* "to cause to keep" from G *ʾaḫāḏum* "to keep"), and is marked by prefixed *s*(*V*) (see Table 8.11).

The N-stem primarily serves as the passive of the G-stem (*naᵗsᵗsakiram* "we (du.) were blocked" from G **ᵗsakārum* "to close, block"), and is characterized by prefixed /n/, which is assimilated to a following consonant (see Table 8.11).

Eblaite also has a set of stems marked by infixed /t/, called the Gt, Dt, and St.

The Gt expresses reciprocal meaning or reflexive meaning in relation to a G-stem verb (*tattakipum* "butting each other"; *tartapiqum* "to lean"). It can also denote separative function when used with motion verbs (*niptarrar* "we will part").

Similarly to Akkadian, the Dt and St primarily express the passive of the D and S-stems respectively. The S has two *t*-stems. Besides the St_1 that serves as the passive of the S (as in *tustaʾḫiḏum* "to be set on fire (?)"), the St_2, which is only distinguishable morphologically in the durative, expresses the reflexive and passive of the S and serves as causative for the Gt and N (as in *yustaʾaḫḫaḏam* "he will instruct", from **ʾḫḏ*). The forms attested in Eblaite are presented in Table 8.12.

Finally, Eblaite also has a set of stems that are characterized by infixed /tan/ (this morpheme, however, is only fully preserved in the durative). The *tn*-stems can be formed from

Table 8.11 Basic forms of the D-, S-, and N-stems in Eblaite.

	D-stem	*S-stem*	*N-stem*
Preterite	*yuparris*	*yusapris*	*yipparis*
Durative	*yuparras*	*yusapras*	*yipparras*
Perfect	*yuptarris*	–	–
Imperative	–	*sapris*	–
Infinitive	*parrusum* (*purrusum*)	*saprusum* (*suprusum*)	–
Participle	*muparrisum*	*musaprisum*	*mupparisum*

Table 8.12 Eblaite t-stems.

	Gt	*Dt*	*St_1*	*St_2*
Preterite	*yiptaras*	–	–	–
Durative	*yiptarras*	*yuptarras*	–	*yustaparras*
Perfect	–	–	–	–
Imperative	–	–	–	–
Infinitive	*taptarisum*	*tuptarrisum*	*tustaprisum*	*ustaprisum*
Participle	–	–	–	–

Table 8.13 Eblaite tn-stems.

	Gtn	*Dtn*
Preterite	*yiptarras*	–
Durative	–	*yuptanarras*
Perfect	–	–
Imperative	–	–
Infinitive	*taptarrisum*	*tuptarrisum*
Participle	*muptarrisum*	–

G-stem and D-stem, and probably also from S-stem and N-stem, which are not so far attested in the texts (see Table 8.13). The *tn*-stems mark iterativity and habitual action, as in *tartappidum* "to wander constantly".

Syntax

The following is just a small sample of syntactic constructions and sentence types in Eblaite. For a more detailed overview on specific problems see Edzard (1984), Hecker (1987), D'Agostino (1992) and Fronzaroli (1996).

Word Order

The word order in Eblaite is very free. In the majority of verbal clauses, the most frequent word order is Verb (V) Subject (S) Object (O), as in *yiddin wakilum kaspam* "the superintendent gave the silver". In addition, the word order SOV is well attested, as in *dayyānān ḫabartam yīkulay* "the two judges consumed (du.) the ration", and SVO, as in *wardū yubbalū sīrka* "the servants will bring your envoy".

In verbless clauses, the word order is usually Subject (S) Predicate (P), even when the subject consists of a personal pronoun, as in *suwa miliknayn* "that is our (du.) decision".

Focus can change the word order, as in *mawnam milkam malkam ʾanta* "As for provisions decide a decision yourself!", where the fronted noun occurs in the accusative.

Agreement

As in Akkadian, Eblaite attests to full agreement. The attributive adjectives agree with the noun they modify in gender, number, and case. The verbal predicates agree with the subject in gender and number.

Relative Clauses

Relative clauses are commonly introduced by relative pronouns. Verbs in relative clauses, and in subordinate clauses in general, are marked by final *-u* in forms ending in an original consonant, as in *ʾastamaʿ ṯa ʾabum yiddinu* "I heard what the father gave". Verbal forms ending in a vowel are not marked in subordinate clauses.

The relative pronoun can also be used without an antecedent and in this case, designates "the one who/what" and can stand for the subject and direct and indirect object of the main verb: *ṯu malkam yimmulu yimūt* "the one who cursed the king will die" (subject); *ṯa tabqayu ʾanta yīhibma* "what you said he loved" (direct object).

In Eblaite relative clauses can also quite frequently be formed without relative pronoun and follow a noun in the bound state, as in *wa ʾaddin nisī maʾdis yistaʿsū* "and I will give (this) to the people who shouted very much here".

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CHAPTER NINE

Elamite

Jan Tavernier[1]

Introduction

Elamite is a language that is attested in written documents from basically two regions, both situated in the southwest of modern Iran. First of all, there is Susiana (modern Khuzestān), the region around the city of Susa. Secondly, there is the region of modern Fārs, with the ancient city of Anshan and the Achaemenid centre Persepolis. The region between these two has also yielded some texts.

One may therefore assume that Elamite was spoken in these areas. Nevertheless, the real geographical territory in which Elamite was spoken is still an issue of debate (Stolper 2004, 60–61). Two contrasting views are defended. According to the first hypothesis, Elamite was spoken in the entire highland of Iran in the late third and early second millennia BCE. In the first millennium, this territory shrank to Susiana and the neighbouring regions. Iranian languages were in use in the rest of Iran. The other hypothesis believes Elamite to be spoken only in Khuzestān, Fārs and the area between both regions.

Whatever the precise extent of the territory of Elamite as a spoken language may be, the Achaemenids still used Elamite as an administrative language in Fārs and Susiana, which should not be that surprising. More puzzling is, however, that Elamite texts were also written in present-day Kandahar, in ancient Arachosia (Fisher & Stolper 2015), which is a long way from the core Elamite territory. Perhaps this implies that Elamite as an administrative language was used in the whole of present-day Iran.

The written Elamite documents date from the twenty-third to the fourth century BCE. Nevertheless, it is well possible that the language was already used earlier than the

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twenty-third century and also later than the fourth century. On the one hand, the so-called Proto-Elamite documents, dating from around 3000 BCE, may well be written in Elamite, but as the Proto-Elamite script is not yet fully deciphered, certainty on this topic cannot yet be given. On the other hand, it is very well possible that the language was still spoken in the post-Achaemenid period. Some Elamite names (e.g. Kamnaskires and Pittit) appear in post-Achaemenid documents and in the New Testament (Acts of the Apostles, c. 80–90 CE), Elamite is still conceived as an autonomous language. It is also possible but not certain that the mysterious language called Khūzī by various Arab authors (ninth to tenth centuries CE) is somehow related to Elamite.

The Elamite language is an isolate language and partly because of this status it is not yet fully known. There may be a distant link to the Dravidian languages (cf. McAlpin 1981), in a sense that possibly a Proto–Elamo–Dravidian language can be reconstructed, but unfortunately this does not help the modern scholar in the study of the Elamite language (Zadok 1995, 243). Nonetheless, Elamite may also have some connections with languages from the Zagros, sharing some features with languages such as Guti (animate delocutive suffix *-r*), Kassite (verbal suffix *-š*) and Lullubite (animate delocutive suffix *-r*). If this were true, Elamite might have originated in the Zagros mountain range. However, these languages are so poorly known that a real comparative study is difficult to conduct.

The name Elam itself is given to us by the Akkadians, through Biblical and Greek intermediation. The Elamites themselves called their land Ha(l)tamti, perhaps meaning "Land of the lord". The name is for the first time attested in an inscription of the Old Elamite king Siwe-palar-huhpak (first half of the eighteenth century BCE).

Although it is sure that Elamite must have had several dialects, these are barely known to us. This is partially due to the scarcity of the sources and to the fact that most Elamite texts have an official (royal) character and were accordingly written in standard Elamite.

Textual Evidence

Elamite belongs to the so-called group of Limited Text Corpus Languages, implying that only a limited number of texts has been found. Yet, the number and variety of Elamite texts is sufficient to enable us to conduct a profound grammatical study of this language, with the awareness that many uncertainties remain.

Proto-Elamite and Linear Elamite

The Proto-Elamite documents are the earliest written documents from Iran (c. 3100–2900 BCE). Unfortunately, the language behind these texts is not yet known with certainty. The majority of the about 1600 Proto-Elamite documents has been discovered mainly in Susa, but sites such as Anshan and Tepe Yahya have also yielded Proto-Elamite texts (cf. Dahl 2013).

Although it is relatively sure that the few dozen Linear Elamite texts are written in Elamite, their script, used by king Puzur-Inšušinak (c. 2140 BCE), is not yet fully deciphered.

Old Elamite (c. 2250–1500 BCE)

Old Elamite is unfortunately badly documented, as the textual corpus is very limited. The oldest text written in cuneiform Elamite is a treaty between the Old Akkadian king Naram-Sin and a king of Awan, a region situated to the north of Susiana.

Next to this treaty, four royal inscriptions, dating from the first half of the second millennium, are preserved. Other royal inscriptions from this period were all drafted in Akkadian or Sumerian. Furthermore, there are two third millennium documentary texts. All these documents have been discovered at Susa.

Finally, various Elamite proper names and possible incantation formulae are attested in contemporary Mesopotamian texts.

Middle Elamite (c. 1500–1000 BCE)

Middle Elamite is traditionally considered as the classical level of the Elamite language. In this sense, the position of Middle Elamite may be compared to the one of Old Babylonian for the Akkadian language.

From this period the largest number of texts is preserved. One of the reasons for this higher number is the decision by the fourteenth century king Humpan-u-mena to have his inscriptions mainly recorded in Elamite, a decision that was adopted by his successors. Before that language policy switch, royal inscriptions were written in Akkadian.

About 175 royal inscriptions in several exemplars can be assigned to this period. They are commissioned by the kings Humpan-u-mena, Kitin-Hutran I, Untaš-Napiriša and his spouse Napir-asu, Šutruk-Nahhunte I, Kutir-Nahhunte II, Šilhak-Inšušinak I and Hutelutuš-Inšušinak, covering a period from about 1375 BCE to about 1100 BCE. It is in these texts that one finds the classical language.

Most inscriptions, written on various materials, come from Susa and Tchogha Zanbil, the great temple complex built by Untaš-Napiriša. Others originate from Liyan (on the Persian Gulf coast), Anshan (Tal-i Malyan) and other sites in southwest Iran.

The only administrative corpus of Middle Elamite documentary texts is an archive that was discovered at Anshan. The archive comprises about 200 small texts and can be dated to the end of the twelfth or the beginning of the eleventh century BCE, i.e. the very end of the Middle Elamite period.

As already mentioned, before the reign of Humpan-u-mena, Akkadian was the prevailing language in the textual material, both in royal and in documentary contexts. Still these Akkadian texts contain various Elamite loanwords as well as personal names, which is of course not surprising, as these texts are well embedded in an Elamite cultural environment. Unfortunately, the precise meaning of these Elamite expressions is not always fully understood.

Neo-Elamite (c. 1000–530 BCE)

Despite the fact that this period is probably the most interesting one for the study of the Elamite language, it is also the least studied one. The main reason for this is simple: there are far more Middle and Achaemenid Elamite texts.

Nevertheless, the largest variety in literary and documentary genres is found in the Neo-Elamite textual material. About 30 royal inscriptions are known and can be attributed to the reigns of Šutruk-Nahhunte II, Šutur-Nahhunte, Hallutuš-Inšušinak II, Šilhak-Inšušinak II, Tepti-Humpan-Inšušinak and Atta-hamiti-Inšušinak. In addition, some high-ranked officials also ordered inscriptions. Some very short inscriptions from the rulers of Samati are also known.

Next to these official inscriptions, there are some texts belonging to other genres. After the Assyrian sack of Susa in 646, Elamites started to translate Mesopotamian literature in Elamite. Two examples of such texts are known: a hemerological text (indicating favourable and unfavourable days) and an omen text, partly a translation of §71 of the Babylonian divinatory composition *Iqqur īpuš* (Tavernier 2010, 214). Both texts are dated to the second half of the seventh century BCE.

The Neo-Elamite period is the first one in which Elamite letters appear. The main corpus are the so-called Nineveh Letters, a group of about 27 diplomatic letters, found in Nineveh, in Susa and in the Arjan tomb. Other letters come from Marbacheh (Ramhormoz) and Armavir Blur (Armenia).

Finally, there are some documentary texts too. The most interesting archive of administrative texts is without doubt the so-called Susa Acropole Archive, consisting of about 299 texts. A smaller archive, the so-called Susa Apadana Archive, has a more juridical character and is composed of seven texts. Both archives probably date to the first half of the sixth century BC.

Achaemenid Elamite (c. 530–331 BCE)

The Achaemenid period is the last phase of Elamite as a written language. The oldest Achaemenid Elamite text is the Elamite version of the well-known Bisitun Inscription, ordered by Darius I (522–486). From him and his successors various royal inscriptions are known. They are for the greater part trilingual (Old Persian, Akkadian and Elamite) and are engraved on rock, weights, architectural elements (e.g. window frames), vases, etc. The youngest one is the Elamite version of an inscription of king Artaxerxes III (358–337 BCE).

Most Achaemenid Elamite texts, however, belong to two large administrative archives: The Persepolis Fortification Archive (not yet completely published) and the Persepolis Treasury Archive. The first group consists of several of thousands of texts. Dating from 509–494 BCE, the Persepolis Fortification Texts deal especially with the ration system in the Persepolis region. The Persepolis Treasury Archive is composed of various texts dating to the period 492–458 BCE. It deals mainly with payments in silver. The existence of such archives in other Achaemenid administrative centres seems to be confirmed by the discovery of similar texts in Susa and Kandahar. Especially the Kandahar textual fragments are important as they stimulate the discussion on the spread and the use of the Elamite language in the Achaemenid Empire.

Achaemenid Elamite was heavily influenced by Old Persian, in so far that the Old Persian word order or other grammatical features (e.g. increased use of prepositions) are often adopted in the Elamite versions of the Achaemenid inscriptions.

Language Contact

Elamite and Akkadian *(cf. De Graef 2013)*

Elamite and Akkadian share a long common history. In the Susiana region, Mesopotamian presence can be seen from the earliest times (e.g. numerical systems) and Elam already appears in Sumerian texts. In addition, this region was sometimes politically dominated by Mesopotamian states (e.g. the Old Akkadian Empire and the Ur-III Empire), which also brought Mesopotamian influence into the Susiana region. Most likely, two communities lived next to each other in Susiana: Elamites and Mesopotamians. This inevitably has led to an intense contact between Akkadian (and Sumerian) and Elamite.

Already the oldest Elamite text, the Naram-Sin Treaty, demonstrates such contacts. It was probably written in Elamite because of the fact that it was a treaty with an Awanite king.

An interesting episode in the history of the Elamite–Akkadian language contact is the reign of Puzur-Inšušinak (c. 2140 BCE). Of this king, who controlled western Iran and a large part of Babylonia, various Akkadian inscriptions are preserved. Some of these were accompanied by an inscription in Linear Elamite, but the inscriptions are no translations of each other. For instance, the Elamite ones do not have curse formulae, contrary to the Akkadian ones. Remarkable too is the fact that Puzur-Inšušinak deliberately chose to use a newly designed script for his Elamite inscriptions, thereby emphasizing the double cultural character of his kingdom.

As a matter of fact, the royal inscriptions dating from the first half of the second millennium (up to the fourteenth century BCE) are practically all written in Akkadian. The documentary and literary texts of the Old and Early Middle Elamite periods are all drafted in Akkadian as well. This, however, does not automatically imply an absence of Elamite. The royal names of these periods are all Elamite. Moreover, Elamite loanwords and expressions seeped into the Akkadian texts. With regard to the non-royal anthroponyms, the situation is a bit more complicated. Whereas Akkadian names outnumbered Elamite ones in the Old Elamite documents from Susa, the inverse was the case in the Early Middle Elamite documents from Haft Tepe.

In the beginning of the Middle Elamite period, Akkadian was still an important language, as is shown by the royal inscriptions and the documentary texts in Akkadian from the capital Haft Tepe. Nevertheless, the role of Akkadian in Susiana decreased heavily from the fourteenth century (i.e. from the reign of Humpan-u-mena) onwards. The number of Elamite texts increases, whereas hardly any Akkadian text is found. This is also the case for the Neo-Elamite period.

In the Achaemenid period, Akkadian was restored as one of the languages of the royal inscriptions (together with Old Persian and Elamite).

Despite this long common history, Elamite and Akkadian have not exerted much linguistic influence on each other. The only clear aspect of influence is lexical: various Elamite loanwords have penetrated into Akkadian (e.g. *kiparu*, *teppir*), whereas several Akkadian loanwords are attested in Elamite (e.g *gigunû*). Logically, Akkadian texts written in Susiana contain more Elamite loans than those written in Mesopotamia. Real morphological or syntactical influence is not attested.

Interesting in this context are also the Elamite formulae found in Old Babylonian Mesopotamian texts. Yet the formulae are far from comprehensible and the question arises

whether they are genuine Elamite incantation formulae or simply Elamite words put together arbitrarily by Mesopotamian scribes to create a kind of magic character.

Elamite and Old Iranian *(cf. Tavernier 2018a)*

The Iranian speaking people arrived in Susiana and Fārs around 800 BCE. From then on, an intense contact between the Iranians and the Elamites developed and by the sixth Century BCE the Iranian speaking people were well established in Susiana and Fārs. This is nicely illustrated by three examples:

1. Around 630 BCE a new dynasty arose in actual Fārs, with Anshan as their capital. This dynasty, called the Teispids, was the forerunner of the well-known Achaemenid dynasty. The mixed character of this dynasty is shown by their names, both Elamite (Cyrus) and Iranian (Cambyses).
2. Another dynasty, the members of which called themselves the "Samatian kings", also has a mixed Elamo-Iranian character, again visible in their names, which are both Iranian and Elamite. Short inscriptions on objects belonging to these kings were found in a cave in southern Luristān.
3. The documents from the Susa Acropole Archive contain various Iranian personal names and some place names and loanwords. This implies that Iranians were actively participating in the economic life of Susa in the beginning of the sixth Century BCE.

These three examples point to a rather high degree of acculturation between both population groups. As a matter of fact, one might speak of an "ethnogénèse" (de Miroschedji 1985, 295), the emergence of a new people out of the Elamites and Iranians.

This acculturation is continued in the Achaemenid period where people with Elamite and Iranian names have the same status and venerate the same gods. Although the Iranian component held the reins of power, Elamite was used in the Persepolis administration and most likely Iranian speaking people were learning Elamite to use it in their administrative jobs.

Contrary to the near absence of influence between Elamite and Akkadian, a real influence from Old Iranian on Elamite can be seen. Indeed, in the Achaemenid period, Elamite became heavily influenced by Old Iranian. Many Old Iranian loan words (and proper names) were integrated into the Elamite lexicon and also the syntax, especially the word order, became more and more Iranian. The increased use of postpositions to express syntactical relations between words or sentence parts may also be considered a result of the intense contacts between the Elamite and the Iranian language.

Old Iranian itself was not influenced by Elamite. It seems that the Elamite language was the receiving party in its contacts with both Akkadian (to a lesser degree) and Old Iranian (to a higher degree).

Sketch of Elamite Grammar

The following sketch aims at presenting a general overview of how the Elamite language functions. It is by no means a detailed description of all grammatical features of Elamite. More detailed grammatical studies (to be found in the bibliography) must

therefore be consulted to acquire a more precise view. In any case, the sketch below is based on these studies.

Writing System

Elamite texts were written by means of the Mesopotamian cuneiform writing system. Two other scripts, however, were also used in the Susa and Anshan region: the so-called Proto-Elamite and Linear Elamite writing systems (cf. supra). Only of Linear Elamite it is sure that it rendered the Elamite language.

The scarcity of Elamite cuneiform texts dating from the third millennium makes it difficult to study the adaptation process of the cuneiform writing system by the Elamites. It is, however, possible to study the specific development of the cuneiform script in Iran. At first (Old and Middle Elamite periods) the Elamite script was a faithful copy of its Mesopotamian counterpart. This means that Mesopotamians could read an Elamite text or that Elamites could read an Akkadian text without necessarily understanding the contents.

At the end of the Middle Elamite period, some Elamite peculiar sign shapes start to appear, but it is only in the second half of the seventh century that the Elamite script has become quite distinct from the contemporary Mesopotamian one, not only with regard to the sign shapes, but also to the scribal habits (e.g. simplification and consequent loss of signs; frequent use of broken writings [CV_1-V_2-C] and abrupt writings [(C)VC-VC], etc.).

Interestingly, logograms are marked by the sign MEŠ, which is not used to indicate plural forms. The Elamite script also has so-called pseudo-logograms, i.e. Elamite words that are treated as a logogram (e.g. ha-al^{meš} for El. *hal* "land").

Phonology

Various reasons make it extremely hard to study Elamite phonology, the two main ones being the fact that Elamite is an isolate language and that the cuneiform writing system was not designed to denote Elamite.

Nevertheless, various types of sources enable us to conduct research on this topic:

1. The rendering of Elamite lexemes and proper names in non-Elamite texts.
2. The rendering of non-Elamite lexemes and proper names in Elamite texts.
3. Graphical variations within Elamite.

Vowels

The Elamite vowels are /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, /u/ and perhaps /ə/. Some specific aspects of Elamite vowels are (cf. Grillot-Susini 2008, 11–12):

1. In all probability, vowels had a nasal variant (as, for instance, in Lycian, with Ã and Ẽ). This is indicated by spellings such as Humpan next to Hupan or *suki* next to *sunki*.
2. /E/ and /i/ may be confused.
3. Final /e/ and /i/ can be omitted.

4. Vowel length is never expressed by the Elamite cuneiform writing system.
5. In the later periods the development /u/ > /i/ was productive. As a result, most signs of the u-series (e.g. MU, NU, etc.) could also be pronounced with *i*. Nevertheless, the vowel /u/ did not disappear from the Elamite phonological inventory. Examples of this shift are *halpu-* > *halpi-*, *nu* > *ni* and *tallu-* > *talli-* (cf. Tavernier 2007, 278–285).
6. The specific use of the signs U and Ú strongly suggests the existence of /o/ or /aw/ in Elamite, denoted by the sign U.

Consonants (Table 9.1)

The postulated Elamite consonants are:

Table 9.1 Elamite consonontal inventory.

	Stops		*Glides*		*Affr.*	*Sonorants*		
	Fortis	*Lenis*	*Fortis*	*Lenis*		*Lat.*	*Trill*	*Nasal*
Labial	p	p′ (b)	f or v					m, m′(ʔ)
Dental	t	t′ (d)						n, n′(ʔ)
Velar	k	k′ (g)						
Palato-alveolar			Š		Č			
Alveolar			s	s′ (z)	ts	l	r	
Laryngeal			H					
Retroflex						ll	rr	

Some remarks (cf. Grillot-Susini 2008, 11–12):

1. There was no distinction between voiced and voiceless consonants. Most likely, a distinction between *fortis* and *lenis* consonants existed. This distinction was in some cases rendered by the graphic doubling of consonants.
2. /H/ gradually disappeared, and this in all positions:

   - Initial: *hiyan* > *iyan*.
   - Medial: *lahliš* > *lališ*.
   - Final: *tunih* > *tuni*.

   This evolution had some morphological consequences, such as the loss of the distinction between third singular and third plural in conjugation I (cf. infra).

Morphology

Word Formation

The majority of Elamite lexemes consists of one or two syllables. Attested forms are CV (e.g. *ta-* "place, put"), VC (e.g. *ak* "and"), VCV (e.g. *iki* "brother") and CVCV (e.g. *zana* "lady"). Some roots are exclusively used for the formation of nominals, but most Elamite roots can be used to form both nominal and verbal lexemes.

Elamite roots may produce derived words by adding a thematic vowel (e.g. *mur* "place"; *muru* "ground; soil"), by full reduplication (e.g. *hut-* "work"; *huthut* "provisions"), by reduplication of the last syllable (e.g. the PN Haltete, derived from Halte; frequently used to form anthroponyms) or by adding suffixes (cf. infra).

The Elamite language possesses many compounds, which may be divided into four categories:

1. Two nouns: *kik-murun* "world, universe" ("heaven – earth"), *hal-menir* "land-regent" ("land - authority holder"), *kap-niškir* "treasurer" ("treasure – guardian").
2. Noun and participle: *hut-halik* "sculpture" ("work-perfected").
3. Two participles: *huttak-halik* "handiwork, accomplishment" ("done-perfected").
4. Infinitive and noun: *paha-huttip* "protective (gods)" ("protect – doers").

Nouns and Adjectives

Like other languages, Elamite possesses substantives, adjectives, pronouns and nominal forms of the verb (infinitive, participle, etc.).

Gender and Number

Elamite does not have the distinction masculine – feminine – neuter. The Elamite nominal inflection rather uses a distinction animate – inanimate. Examples of both genders are:

1. Animate: *elt(i)* "eye", *nap* "god", *pat* "foot", *sunki* "king", etc.
2. Inanimate: *hal* "land", *hiš* "name", *kap* "treasure", *ulhi* "house", etc.

In concordance with many other languages, Elamite has a singular and a plural. Dual forms are not attested.

Declension

Nouns belonging to the animate class can belong to three personal classes in the singular, which correspond with the three persons of the verbal conjugation. The plural is only attested with delocutive animate nouns. Note that kinship nouns (e.g. *atta* "father") do not take classifying suffixes. See Tables 9.2 and 9.3.

The classifying suffixes are:

Table 9.2 Elamite nominal classifying suffixes.

	Animate	*Animate*	*Inanimate*
Person	*Singular*	*Plural*	*Singular*
1 (locutive)	-k		
2 (allocutive)	-t		
3 (delocutive)	-r	-p	Ø
			-me
			-n
			-t

Examples:

Table 9.3 Examples of use of classifying suffixes.

	Animate	*Animate*	*Inanimate*
Person	*Singular*	*Plural*	*Singular*
1 (locutive)	sunki-k "(I, the) king"		
2 (allocutive)	sunki-t "(you, the) king"		
3 (delocutive)	sunki-r "(he, the) king"	sunki-p "(they, the) kings"	ulhi "house" sunki-me "kingship" siya-n "temple" hala-t "clay"

Delocutive suffixes are also used to produce agent nouns (only in the animate gender), ex. *Hutti-r* "maker" (from *hut-* "to make", with epenthetic *i*). In the inanimate gender the suffix *-me* is used to form abstract nouns, e.g. *husame* "forest" (from *husa* "wood") and *sunkime* "kingship" (from *sunki* "king"). Roots may also produce nouns using more than just one suffix. For example, both Achaemenid Elamite nouns *muši-n* and *muši-me* mean "account" and are derived from the verb *muši-* "calculate, register".

Elamite has no real case system. The only case suffixes are genitive *-na* and locative *-ma* and both are mainly attested in Neo- or Achaemenid Elamite.

Adjectives

Elamite adjectives are not a separate morphological category and have the same structure as substantives. They also use the same classifiers, e.g. *riša-k* "(I, the) great", *riša-r* "(he, the) great". Passive verbal participles in *-k* may also have an adjectival function: *halpi-k-a* "dead", *hani-k* "loved", *haštu-1k* "venerated", *katu-k-a* "alive", *mišnu-k-a* "bad". These adjectives may in their turn be transformed into substantives by adding the delocutive suffix: *hutla-k-r-i* "someone who is sent, envoy", *ippa-k-r-a* "strong one", *ištu-k-r-a* "weak person, weakling", *katu-k-r-a* "living person".

Pronouns

Personal Pronouns

The personal pronouns are the only Elamite nominals using a case system. The pronouns of the first and second person have a nominative/dative form without inflectional suffixes and an accusative form characterised by a suffix *-n*.

In the following tables, a distinction is made between "ancient" Elamite (i.e. Old and Middle and Early Neo-Elamite) and "recent" Elamite (Late Neo-Elamite and Achaemenid Elamite).

Table 9.4 Elamite independent pronouns of the 1st and 2nd person.

Pers.	*Singular*				*Plural*			
	Nom./Dat.		*Acc.*		*Nom./Dat.*		*Acc.*	
	Ancient	*Recent*	*Ancient*	*Recent*	*Ancient*	*Recent*	*Ancient*	*Recent*
1	u	u	u-n	u(-n)	nika	nuku		nuku-n
2	ni	nu		nu-n	num	numi	numu-n	numi-n

The resumptive pronoun *ir*, as well as the demonstrative pronouns (cf. infra), can also be used as personal pronoun of the 3rd person:

Table 9.5 Elamite resumptive pronoun used as 3rd person independent pronoun.

	Singular		*Plural*	
	Nom./Dat.	*Acc.*	*Nom./Dat.*	*Acc.*
Animate	i-r	i-r	ap(pi)	appi-n, appa-n (Ach. El.)
Inanimate	i(-n)	i(-n)		

Resumptive Pronouns

A resumptive pronoun, appearing always right before the verb, is a noun which refers to a nominal element mentioned earlier in a sentence, e.g. *^{d}IM ak ^{d}Šala lansitippa apun murtaḫ* "Adad and Šala, as golden (statues) I placed them".

The forms *ir* (animate) and *i*(*n*) (inanimate) are frequently used as resumptive pronouns indicating the direct object of conjugated verbs. In addition, the element *aḫa* "here" (Old, Middle and Neo-Elamite), *aḫ* (Neo-Elamite and Achaemenid Elamite), *ḫa* (Achaemenid Elamite) may also be used as resumptive pronoun.

Demonstrative Pronouns

Proximal demonstrative pronouns ("this") occur in texts dated to all periods. Distal demonstratives ("that") only start to appear in the Achaemenid period.

Table 9.6 Elamite demonstrative pronouns.

		Singular		*Plural*	
		Proximal	*Distal*	*Proximal*	*Distal*
Animate	Ancient	i		ap	
	Recent	(h)i	hupe-r(r)i	ap(pi)	hupe-pi
Inanimate	Ancient	i			

Possessive Pronouns

Elamite possessive pronouns are traditionally divided in two groups: enclitic possessive pronouns and non-enclitic possessive pronouns.

The non-enclitic possessive pronouns (type 1) are actually nothing more than personal pronouns that are positioned after the possessed item and that correspond with it through nominal classifiers.

Table 9.7 Elamite possessive pronouns.

Person and gender	*Singular*		*Plural*	
	Ancient	*Recent*	*Ancient*	*Recent*
1 animate	u-r(i)	u-r(i)	nika-pi	
1 inanimate	u-me(-ni)	unina/i, unan	nika-me	nuka-me
2 animate	ni-ri			
2 inanimate	nu-me			
3 animate	i/e-r(i)			
3 inanimate	i-me		api-me, api-te	appini, hupirrini

The enclitic possessive pronouns (type 2) have a different character, as they are not declined and accordingly, they do not exhibit the distinction between animate and inanimate nouns. The most frequently attested one is undoubtedly *-e* "his, her, its" (attested already in Old Elamite).

In Achaemenid Elamite, *-še* "his, her, its" is the Elamite rendering of the Old Iranian enclitic possessive pronoun *-šai* > *-šē* "his, her, its".

Table 9.8 Elamite enclitic possessive pronouns.

Person	*Singular*		*Plural*	
	Ancient	*Recent*	*Ancient*	*Recent*
1		-ta	-nika	
2		-ni		
3	-e	-e, -še	-ap(p)e	-ap(p)e

The Elamite language also has a way to express the reflexive possessive pronoun by combining the noun *tuh* "property" with an enclitic possessive pronoun. Examples are *hiš tuh-e* "his own name" (Middle Elamite) and *Kambuziya halpi tuhema halpik* "Cambyses died his own death".

Relative and Interrogative Pronouns

The Elamite relative pronouns are *akka* "who" and *appa* "that, which". A plural form *akkap* "who" is attested in the Late Neo-Elamite and Achaemenid periods.

Under Old Persian influence, the Achaemenid Elamite relative pronouns can also be used as indicators of appositional relations in two ways:

1. Between substantive and attribute: PN *akka magus* = Old Persian PN *haya 15 im a* "PN the magian", lit. "PN, who is a magian".
2. Between a noun and its complement: *taššup appa unina* "my troops", lit. "the troops that are mine".

The invariable pronoun *mur* means "where": *kat* ^{15}*im mur halmarraš hi kušik* "On this terrace, where this fortress has been built". It can also appear in indirect questions, e.g.: *mur humahšita inme turnah* "I do not know where they have brought it".

Elamite has two attested interrogative pronouns: *akka* "who?" and *appa hamak* "of what sort?".

Indefinite Pronouns

The indefinite pronouns are *akkar* "someone" and *aški* (only attested in Neo-Elamite and Achaemenid Elamite) "something". In combination with the negating particle they obviously assume a meaning "nobody" and "nothing".

Adjectival Pronouns

The adjectival pronouns are *unra* "each" and *marrita* "all, entire".

Negation

The Elamite negation particle is *in*. In Old, Middle and Neo-Elamite (and exceptionally also in Achaemenid Elamite) it may be accompanied by nominal classifiers, resulting in forms like *inki* (1st sg.), *inri* (3rd sg.), *inni* (inanimate) or *inme* (inanimate). Examples are *inki tun* "I will not be receiving" and *inki in tununkumar* "I will not give it". These classifiers make the negation particle correspond with the subject.

From the Middle Elamite period onwards the particle *inni* gradually absorbs all other forms and by the Achaemenid period it also replaces the animate forms to become the generally but not exclusively used negating element.

Particles

Vocative

In Middle and Neo-Elamite, the particle *e* indicates the vocative: *e Inšušinak* "O Inšušinak". However, this particle disappeared, although not completely, in the Achaemenid period.

Numerals

Elamite numerals are not well-known, because they are nearly always written by numbers (as is also the case in the other languages using cuneiform script). The only fully written

numeral is *ki* "one", which is used with both animates (*ruh ki-r* "one man") and inanimates (*pel ki-ma* "within one year").

In Achaemenid Elamite, the ordinal numerals are generally followed by *-ummema, -ummena* or *-ummemana*. In all probability, one is dealing here with constructions of the nominal suffix *-me* in combination with *-ma* and *-na*. Fractions are denoted by the suffixes *-irmaki* and *-kurmaki*.

Postpositions

The Elamite language makes regular use of postpositions to indicate spatial and temporal relations between different elements of a phrase. In the older periods the postpositions are not very numerous and are rather indicators of spatial relations (referring to place or direction):

1. *ma* "in" (locative postposition): *talluh ak siyan Inšušinakni-ma tah* "I inscribed (them) and I placed (them) in the temple of Inšušinak".
2. *sima* "before, in front of": *hunipin sima* "In front of the *hunipin*".
3. *sira* "before, in front of": *Inšušinak ir sira ani uzzun* "Inšušinak, before him may he not walk around".
4. *tur* "for": *takki ume tur hih* "I prayed for my life".

In the more recent periods, the postpositions become more and more frequently used. This is probably a reaction to the gradual weakening of the Elamite nominal and syntactical system. This weakening process took place under Old Persian influence. The Neo- and Achaemenid Elamite postpositions are:

1. *em* "from": only used with the verb *tu-* "take" and a pronoun (sg. *i* or pl. *ap*), e.g. *meni Kammatta akka makuš Kanbuziya emi tuš* "Then Gaumāta the magian took away from Cambyses".
2. *hatma* "in, at, for": locative, both temporal and spatial. Example: *2 palum hatma* "at two storehouses".
3. (*ik*)*ki* "to": direction. Example: *anka tuppi ni ikmar Parnaka ikki tippe tanta* "When you send a tablet from you to Parnaka".
4. *ikk*(*i*)*mar*: "away from" (only with animates). Example: *anka tuppi ni ikmar Parnaka ikki tippe tanta* "When you send a tablet from you to Parnaka".
5. *intukkime* "because of". Example: *hupe intukkime mušimme inni hutttakka* "Because of this the accounting was not done".
6. *itaka* "with". Example: *meni Mimana taššup itaka meri ir taka sak* "Then Mimana, with the troops, in pursuit of him, advanced".
7. *lakka* "beyond". Example: *Yauna … akkap kam lakka marrišta* "The Ionians who have seized the area beyond the sea".
8. *ma* "in; for; in front of; by means of" (spatial and temporal). Example: (*grain*) *kantima taka* "(grain) has been deposited in the storehouse".
9. *mar* "from" (only with inanimates). Example: *Harassumar* "from (the place) Harassu".
10. *-na* "of", extremely frequent genitive indication. Example: *zaumin Uramašta-na* "By the effort of Ahuramazda", ĒŠŠANA *Hatamtip-na* "The king of the Elamites".
11. *sima* "before, in front of" (spatial). Example: *zalmi umini … Mašti …sima kitenuh* "I have protected magically my statuary before Mašti".

12. ŠÀ-*ma* (Hallock 1969, 753) or *šà-ma* (Hinz & Koch 1987, 1128) "within, among". Example: KUŠ GUD *hupe šama* "among those cowhides".
13. *tippa* "before, in front of". Example: *3* GUD IN *Umpartašpena sunki tippa makka* "3 cattle in pasture(?), of the people from Umpartaš were consumed before the king (i.e. at his court)".
14. *tupaka* "to, in the direction of, towards; concerning". Example: *akkari aški Kam-ma-ad-da makuš tupaka inni lilmak* "No one attained anything concerning Gaumāta the magian".
15. *ukku* "on". Example: *kutta halat ukku kutta* KUŠ *ukku* "Both on clay and on parchment".

A real preposition is *kuš* "until" (attested from the Middle Elamite period onwards).

Verbal Morphology

Verbal Roots

Elamite verbal roots may be divided into three groups:

1. Simple roots: *li-* "give, deliver", *ta-* "put, place", *tunu-* "give, donate", etc.
2. Reduplicated roots, whereby the reduplication may express some kind of plurality. There are two types:
   a. Full reduplication ($C_1V_1 > C_1V_1C_1V$): *li-~ lili-* "give, deliver", *ta- ~ tatta-* "put, place".
   b. Partial reduplication:
      - Repetition of the first syllable ($C_1V_1C_2V_2 > C_1V_1C_1V_1C_2V_2$): *kata/u- ~ kakkata-* "to live", *sikka- ~ sissikka-* "to set up", *tallu/i- ~ tatallu/i-* "to write" (from older **taltallu-*).
      - Repetition of the first consonant before the second one ($C_1V_1C_2V_2 > C_1V_1C_1C_2V_2$). This is the most frequent type of reduplication: *hapu- ~ hahpu-* "to hear, listen", *hutta- ~ huhta-* "to do", *kazza- ~ kakza-* "to forge", *kuši- ~ kukši-* "to build, construct", *pera- ~ pepra-* "to read", *peti- ~ pepti-* "to become hostile, revolt".
3. Compound roots: *mur* "place" + *ta-* "to put" > *murta-* "to place, set up". In most cases, the verb *ma-* "to put" is one of the elements: *el* "eye" + *ma-* > *elma-* "consider, think", *ki/ur* "hand" + *ma-* > *kurma-* "to allocate", *tu(h)* "self" + *ma-* > *tuma-* "to take, receive".

Many lexemes have both nominal and verbal forms: *irša* "big, great" – "become great, increase", *me* "behind – follow", *tu*(*h*) "property – take", etc.

Conjugations

Elamite verbs have three conjugations. Whereas the first one is a purely verbal conjugation, both the second and third can be labelled "nominal".

The first conjugation is only attested with transitive verbs and expresses a completed action. It consists of the verbal base and personal endings. In the following table asterisked forms are not attested as such. See Tables 9.9 to 9.16.

Table 9.9 Elamite verbal conjugation.

	Middle Elamite		*Achaemenid Elamite*	
Person	*Singular*	*Plural*	*Singular*	*Plural*
1	-h	-hu	-Ø	-ut
2	-t	-ht	*-t	*-t
3	-š	-hš	-š	-š

Examples:

Table 9.10 Verbal conjugation: examples.

	Middle Elamite		*Achaemenid Elamite*	
Person	*Singular*	*Plural*	*Singular*	*Plural*
1	kulla-h	kulla-hu	marri-Ø	hutta-ut
2	hap-t	hutta-ht	*-t	*-t
3	hutta-š	hutta-hš	hutta-š	hutta-š

The two other conjugations are participial conjugations, since they are both based on the verbal participles. The main characteristic of the second conjugation is the presence of *k* just after the verbal root. The forms have an intransitive, passive, completed and adjectival value. The endings of this conjugation are the nominal classifiers.

Table 9.11 Elamite k-conjugation.

	Middle Elamite		*Achaemenid Elamite*	
Person	*Singular*	*Plural*	*Singular*	*Plural*
1	*-k-k		-k-it	
2	*-k-t		-k-t	
3	-k	-k-p	-k-Ø	-Ø-p

Examples:

Table 9.12 Elamite k-conjugation: examples.

	Middle Elamite		*Achaemenid CElamite*	
Person	*Singular*	*Plural*	*Singular*	*Plural*
1			šinnu-k-it	
2			katu-k-t	
3	hutta-k	hutta-k-p	hutta-k-Ø	šinnu-Ø-p

Note that in the third singular (Achaemenid Elamite) the expected suffix *r* is not written. When it is attached to the passive participle it denotes a noun: *halpik* "dead", *halpikra* "dead person".

In Achaemenid Elamite, the first person suffix is always written and may also be attached to nouns in order to express the verb "to be", e.g. *inni titukra-k-it* "I am not a liar".

The third conjugation is also nominal, but here the conjugational consonant is *n*. This conjugation has an incomplete value and is used with transitive as well as intransitive verbs.

Table 9.13 Elamite n-conjugation.

	Middle Elamite		*Achaemenid Elamite*	
Person	*Singular*	*Plural*	*Singular*	*Plural*
1	-n-k	n-un-k	-n-k	n-un
2	-n-t		-n-t	
3	-n-r	-n-p	-n-r	-n-p

Examples:

Table 9.14 Elamite n-conjugation: examples.

	Middle Elamite		*Achaemenid Elamite*	
Person	*Singular*	*Plural*	*Singular*	*Plural*
1	hutta-n-k	turu-n-un-k	na-n-k	hutti-n-un
2	hutta-n-t		na-n-t	
3	hutta-n-r	tahha-n-p	na-n-r	na-n-p

Each of these three conjugations has a parallel one, the so-called *m*-conjugation (usually labelled Im, IIm and IIIm). These conjugations are formed by inserting *-ma-* directly after the root (*hutti-ma-* "to do"). *Ma-* is probably an auxiliary verb, but the precise function and meaning of these conjugations are not clear.

Table 9.15 Elamite m-conjugation.

		Middle Elamite		*Achaemenid Elamite*	
Conjugation	*Person*	*Singular*	*Plural*	*Singular*	*Plural*
Im	1	-ma-h		-ma	
	3		-ma-h-š	-ma-š	-ma-š
IIm	3	-ma-k		-ma-k	
IIIm	1			-ma-n-k	-ma-n-un
	2			-ma-n-t	
	3	-ma-n-r		-ma-n-r	-ma-n-p

Examples:

Table 9.16 Elamite m-conjugation: examples.

		Middle Elamite		*Achaemenid Elamite*	
Conjugation	*Person*	*Singular*	*Plural*	*Singular*	*Plural*
Im	1	sahti-ma-h		tu-ma	
	3		tiri-ma-h-š	tu-ma-š	tu-ma-š
IIm	3	mišir-ma-k		tu-ma-k	
IIIm	1			šera-ma-n-k	tiri-ma-n-un
	2			mazzi-ma-n-t	
	3	pepšir-ma-n-r		tu-ma-n-r	tu-ma-n-p

From the Late Neo-Elamite period onwards, more and more Iranian influence becomes visible in the Elamite language. This has led to some kind of systematisation in the use of the verbal conjugations in Achaemenid Elamite. The Old Persian future forms (subjunctive) were always rendered by Elamite forms of the third conjugation, whereas Old Persian presents appear in Elamite as forms of the IIIm-conjugation.

Nomino-Verbal Forms

Elamite has two participles, which may also have an adjectival function. The first one is composed of the root and the suffix *–k* and represents a passive form (e.g. *hutta-k* "made"). It is mostly translated by a passive participle. The second one is composed of the root and the suffix *-n*. It indicates an active and incomplete action (e.g. *huttan* "making"). The link of both participles with the conjugations II and III is clear.

Elamite infinitives do not have their own forms and are expressed by:

1. The verbal root without any suffixes, e.g. *GN-mar* GN_2 *laki* "to cross from GN to GN_2".
2. A form of conjugation III, e.g. *meni ušera* TUP^{meš} *talli-ma-n-a* "Then I ordered an inscription to be written".

Finally, the Elamite language also possesses a verbal noun with the same form as the active participle: *li-n* "gift" (from *li-* "to give"), *murta-n* "installation" (from *murta-* "to install"), *piti-n* "transfer, assignment" (from *piti-* "to transfer, to reassign").

Verbal Modes

Imperative

The Middle Elamite imperative uses the conj. I form of the 2nd sg., e.g. *hap-t* "listen!", *ten-t* "be merciful!". In Neo- and Achaemenid Elamite, however, forms of the 3rd sg. (conj. I) are used: *mite-š … halpi-š* "go forth and slay!", *hutta-š* "do!". There is no distinction between singular and plural.

Prohibitive

This mode is indicated by conjugation III forms preceded by the particle *anu/i*: *anu izzun* "May he not walk around", *hupe anu huttant* "Do not do this!".

Optative/Precative

The optative is formed by adding the suffix *-ni* or *-na* (= -ni+a) to conjugation I and II forms: *huttahš-ni* "May they do", *katakt-ni* "May you live", *taš-ni* "May he put, place", *telak-ni* "May it be dedicated".

Anterority

Verbal forms accompanied by *-ti, -ta* (= *-ti* + *-a)* are omnipresent in Elamite. Nonetheless, the suffixes are mostly attested with a 3rd singular form of conjugation I, as in *huttašta* "he has done" or *kušišta* "he has built". In Middle Elamite, this mode often occurs in subordinate clauses. In Achaemenid Elamite, however, they are also attested in main clauses.

In all likelihood, these forms express a completed action in the past (anteriority) and are accordingly translated by means of a perfect or pluperfect, as in *akka kušišta imme turnah* "I do not know who has constructed it" or *u siyan nappanna hutta appa Kammatta akka makuš sarišta* "I (re-)constructed the temples of the gods that Gaumāta the magician had destroyed".

The Suffix -a

In general, this suffix is the last morpheme of a cluster, but again exceptions are attested, e.g. *kuši-š-t-a-p* "women who have given birth". It can have two functions:

1. As an indication of subordination. In this sense, it was originally the indication of nominal predicates of a subordinate clause. In Achaemenid Elamite, it is usually attested after subordinated verbal forms. When, however, the clause was accompanied by a relative pronoun or a conjunction, it could be omitted.
2. The suffix may also have a coordinating function: *maurriša appin halpiš* "He captured and slew them".

In both cases it connects phrases or parts of phrases and helps thus to bring some structure into the text.

Syntax

Syntactic Relations

Many languages express their syntactic relations by means of a case system. Elamite was not one of them, albeit it is not void of any case element either (cf. supra).

Lacking a case system, Elamite had to find other ways to express its syntactical relations. In fact, it used a system of classifying suffixes and relational particles. Therefore, word-order is very important. The usual word order is:

subject (+modifier) – indirect object (+modifier) – direct object (+modifier) – resumptive pronoun (s) – verb.

Example: *u siyan kuših Inšušinak ak Simut ap in tunih* "I constructed the temple. The gods Inšušinak and Simut, to them I gave it".

In the later periods, word order became freer, partly because of the emergence and frequent use of postpositions to indicate the precise relations between words. This emergence was in any case partially due to influence from the Indo-European Iranian languages, in particular Old Persian, with which the Elamites came into intense contact in the Neo-Elamite period.

Elamite uses *classifying suffixes* to indicate the precise relationship between a noun and its complement(s). As already mentioned, they can be found anywhere, not only after substantives or pronouns, but also after the negation particle or locative adverbs (e.g. *aha*).

If A is determined by B, the structure of the group is A-suffix B-suffix, e.g. *sunki-k Anšan-i-k* "I, the king of Anshan", *PN sunki-r Hatamti-r* "PN, the king of Elam".

Relational particles (e.g. *pat* "foot", *šara* "under", *ukku* "head; on"), in combination with classifiers, are used to indicate spatial relationships between nouns or pronouns: *pat-r* "he who is under", *šara-r* "he who is below", *ukku-p* "those who are above".

An example is *petir uri ni patr ur tatni* "My enemy, may you place (him) below me", literally "my enemy (*peti-r u-ri*), you (*ni*) below (*pat-r*) me (*u-r*) may you place (*ta-t-ni*)". Here the classifier *-r-* connects *pat* and *u*.

Coordination

Coordination in Elamite is expressed both asyndetically and syndetically by means of the conjunction *ak*. In Achaemenid Elamite (royal inscriptions), this lexeme is also used to introduce a paragraph. *Kutta* is also used in the later periods.

Subordination

Originally, subordinate phrases were inserted in the text without any subordinating conjunction. They only took a particle *-a* to indicate the subordination. An example is *U Šutruk-Nahhunte Inšušinak napir uri ur tahhanra Akkat halpuh* "When my god Inšušinak, commanded it to me, Šutruk-Nahhunte, I destroyed Akkad", lit. "I, Šutruk-Nahhunte (*U Šutruk-Nahhunte*), my god Inšušinak (*Inšušinak napi-r u-ri*) me (*u-r*) commanding (*tahha-n-r-a*), I destroyed (*halpu-h*) Akkad (*Akkat*)".

Next to this type of construction, subordinate phrases may also be expressed by subordinating conjunctions. This happened more frequently in the Late Neo-Elamite and Achaemenid periods. Such conjunctions are *anka* "when", *appa anka* "after", *kuš* "until", *meni sap anka* "after", *sap* "while, when", *sap appa* "when" and *sap innu* "as long as". Usually the subordinate phrase is situated before the verb of the main clause.

Direct Discourse

In Elamite, direct discourse is indicated by *-man-k* (1st sg.), *-ma-r* (3rd sg.) or *-ma-p* (3rd pl.), all positioned at the end of the direct discourse, e.g. *ir unsaha ma-ra tirinra* ""I paid him", he says".

A specific kind of documents was always considered direct discourse, not only in the Elamite culture, but basically in all Ancient Near Eastern cultures: the letters. This is made clear by the introductory formulas (ex. *PN turuš PN_2 nan turuš* "Say to PN, PN_2 has said, saying").

NOTES

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CHAPTER TEN

Amorite

Viktor Golinets

Introduction

The Amorite language belongs to the western branch of the Semitic language family, and it is the oldest known West-Semitic language. It is attested in loanwords as well as personal and geographic names preserved in Akkadian texts. Due to the syllabic nature of the cuneiform script, Amorite is the only West-Semitic language whose complete attestations are available in vocalized form.

Attestation

The Amorite language is attested from ca. 2500 to 1200 BCE in Babylonia, in the Central Euphrates (Mari), as well as in Northern (Chagar Bazar, Tell al-Rimah, Shemshara) and North-Western regions of Mesopotamia (Alalaḫ, Ebla, Tuttul). It is attested in ca. 90 loanwords (see below under Lexicon) and ca. 6000 different personal names (see below).

The English term "Amorite" derives from the Akkadian adjective *Amurrû* ("Westerner") that corresponds to Sumerian *Mard/tu*. This geographic designation identified inhabitants of regions lying to the West and North-West of Babylonia.

The bulk of the information about the Amorites comes from the palace archives of Mari, where 15 000 to 20 000 fragments of cuneiform tablets have been found (cf. Streck 2010, 45 concerning the number of texts). Many texts have been edited in the series *Archives Royales de Mari* and in sundry publications. The Mari texts describe Amorites as half-nomads, who carried out small livestock breeding and farming (Kärger 2014, 12–14 and passim). Many Amorite loanwords belong to these main activities of the semi-nomadic population (Streck 2000, 123–124). Since the Amorites originally

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were a non-urban population, they adopted the Akkadian language and script as a means of (official) correspondence.

The geographic origin of the Amorites is not clear. However, there is no need to explain this origin in terms of migration from one region to another, as it often was suggested for different Semitic people. The Amorites may be a relatively old population group of Syria, whose existence in historical times became documented in Akkadian texts. The Amorites lived a half-nomadic life in the Middle Euphrates region and in the Syrian steppe. After their infiltration into Babylonia at the end of the third millennium BCE, the Amorites eventually merged into other ethnic groups and into the urban population of Babylonian city-states.

Kärger 2014 exhaustively described the social and economic life of the Amorites on the basis of the information contained in the texts from Mari.[1] The semi-nomadic population was organized in tribes and clans, with chieftains (*sugāgu*) at their tops. There were five tribes: Šimʔāl, Yamīn, Sūtu, Numḫu and Yamūt-baʕal. The kings of Mari, the biggest Amorite town, were of Šimʔāl origin. The rangeland of Šimʔāl was in the Middle Euphrates region northwards of Mari (loc. Cit., 144–145). The rangeland of Yamīn was to the west of Mari (loc. cit., 161). Sūtu lived to the south of Mari, in the province Suḫum and to the west in the region of Tadmor (Palmyra) (loc. cit. 204–205, 214). Numḫu and Yamūt-baʕal settled northeast around Ǧebel Sinǧār (loc. cit. 231–233). Due to seasonal transhumance, tribes possessed summer and winter pastureland.

The main economic activities of the Amorites were transhumance pasturing of small cattle, cultivation of grains, especially of barley and sesame, and hunt. Texts also mention salt mining and logging in the region of the river Ḫabur (Kärger 2014, 18–19). The social and political activities of the tribes were trade (including slave trade), military service for the king, messenger and escort service, raids against other tribes and caravans, and plundering of fields before the harvest time (Kärger 2014, passim). The raids sometimes resulted in hostage-taking (Kärger 2014, 212).

The Amorite theophoric personal names contain deity names, which allow some insight into the religious life of the nomads (cf. Streck 2004). The most common deity names are ʔAdmu, ʔAmi/u, ʔAnnu, ʔErra, ʕAštar, Baʕal, Dagan, Ḫadda/u, Nabû, Sîn, Šamaš, Yammu, Yaraḫ, as well as the appellative *ʔilu/ʔelu* "god". The veneration of Dagan, Sîn and Hadda/u by the Amorites is also attested in the Akkadian texts (Streck 2004, 422–423). Besides these names, some nouns appear in the personal names as theophoric epithets. To this group belong kin terms: *ʔab-u* "father", *ʔaḫ-u* "brother", *ʕamm-u* "father's brother", *ḫāl-u* "mother's brother", *dād-u* "uncle"; designation of (groups of) persons: *ǧāy-u* "tribe", *lîm-u* "clan", *ʔašd-u* "warrior"; abstract terms: *šum-u* "name", *ḏimr-u* and *sitr-u* "shelter", *kap-u* and *qatar* "rock", *ʔaṯar* "luck", *ʕadn-u* "delight" (cf. Streck 2004, 425–426).

There is no known Amorite text (Streck 2000, 76; Ziegler and Charpin 2007, 55), but the distinction between Amorite and other languages was known to the ancient speakers and scribes, who mentioned Amorite alongside other languages like Sumerian, Elamite and "Subarian" i.e. Hurrian.[2] Unfortunately, we have no precise information about the status of Amorite as a spoken language. From the mention of Amorite along with other languages and from the Amorite vocabulary that belongs to different spheres of nomadic life, we can deduce that Amorite was, at least in the Old-Babylonian period (twentieth to

sixteenth centuries BCE), a means of everyday communication within the nomadic population. At the same time, since there was no literary tradition of writing down Amorite texts and no standardized orthography for Amorite words in Akkadian texts, it can be inferred that the morphological forms were written down in Akkadian texts as they were pronounced. Therefore, the variant spellings of the same personal name or of the same lexical item within comparable names allow the researchers to recognize specific West-Semitic phonological features in the Amorite material.

The boundary between the Amorite and other West-Semitic dialects in the second half of the second millennium BCE is not easy to draw. For instance, some of the West-Semitic names attested in Ugarit may be Ugaritic and not Amorite, but it is impossible to distinguish the former from the latter (cf. Golinets 2018, 9). In Syria, the Arameans appeared approximately in the same area where the Amorites lived (cf. Streck 2011, 453). This fact still awaits its historical and linguistic interpretation. The morphological features of the Amorite language do not allow unequivocally classifying it as belonging to either the Canaanite or the Aramaic phylum (cf. Streck 2011, 453).

Since the period of attestation of the Amorite language is more than a thousand years, and since it was used in different regions, there must have been dialectal variants between the speakers of different Amorite tribes (cf. Kärger 2014, 143–259 about different Amorite tribes). However, the onomastic material contains only very restricted information about the linguistic developments (cf. below under "Verb"), because the personal names tend to preserve archaic features absent from the contemporary spoken language (cf. Streck 2000, 143–145 for the Amorite and Layton 1990 for the Hebrew names). Names attested in Babylonia and in Mari share the same morphophonological features (cf. Golinets 2018, 29, 32, 34–35, 40–41, 54–57, 59, 73, 170, 321).

Huehnergard (1992, 150) in his assessment of the possibilities of the philological treatment of the Amorite corpus noted that it "is not subject to normal linguistic tests for meaning, structure, and development, since names may lack any firm connection to the language spoken by their bearer". This scepticism is unjustified, since philological and onomastic considerations allow describing the grammar of the onomasticon and to decode the meaning of the names, even if not every name can (at present) be explained. It should, however, be kept in mind that the onomastic material allows reconstructing only the linguistic features of the language of the names and not of the contemporary vernacular.

Durand (2012) rejected Amorite as an independent language and regarded it and Akkadian as dialects of one language. Durand's thesis lacks linguistic methodology and does not help to understand the traits that distinguish Amorite from Akkadian. Streck (2012, 316–324) provided linguistic arguments against Durand's suggestion.

The linguistic distinction between Akkadian and Amorite nouns and names is made on phonological, morphological, and etymological grounds. While loanwords and specific West-Semitic lexemes (cf. Golinets 2016b for the latter) can be discerned due to etymological and phonological reasons, the analysis of morphological forms within personal names demands an understanding of the onomastic structure and the meaning of a given name. Older studies of the Amorite language, similar to many studies of other West-Semitic onomastic corpora, often analyse names by only identifying a verbal root, without paying attention to onomastic and semantic considerations. For achieving a reliable grammatical and semantic analysis of proper names, the question should be asked, whether the

onomastic pattern recognized in a name is attested elsewhere within the particular onomasticon and whether it has parallels within other Semitic onomastica. The morphophonological and onomastic analyses should mutually support each other. Only a name treatment that accounts for the onomastic concept behind every name can yield a sound base for the linguistic description.

The biggest collection of the Amorite material is Gelb 1980, where he listed and analysed 6662 names (cf. p. 653). However, many of the names listed there exhibit no specific Amorite linguistic traits and can be analysed as Akkadian (cf. Golinets 2018, 13–14, 503–516). Many names are attested in a number of different spellings, so that the overall amount of Amorite material can be given as ca. 20 000 names.[3] The number of Amorite words is specified as 11 600 (Streck 2010, 39).

The Amorite onomastic material allows the reconstruction of Amorite phonology, verbal and nominal morphology, and lexicon. For phonology and nominal morphology cf. Streck 2000; for verbal morphology cf. Golinets 2018; for the lexicon cf. Streck 2000, Knudsen 2004, and Golinets 2016b (faunal terms) and 2018, 353–457 (verbal roots). A summary of Amorite grammar is given in Streck 2011.[4]

Phonology

The cuneiform orthography clearly denotes the vowels, but it is imprecise with regard to the consonants. Variant spellings show the presence of Proto-Semitic consonants that are absent in Akkadian. Amorite has the inventory of consonantal phonemes (cf. Tropper 2001, 738; Streck 2011, 453–454) as seen in Table 10.1:

Table 10.1 Amorite consonantal inventory.

	obstruents						
	stops			*fricatives*			
	voiceless	*emphatic*	*voiced*	*voiceless*	*emphatic*	*voiced*	***resonants***
bilabial	p		b				m, w
dental	t	ṭ	d	ṯ	ẓ (ʔ)	ḏ	n, r
alveolar				s	ṣ	z	l
postalveolar				š			
palatal							y
velar	k	q	g				
uvular				ḫ		ġ	
pharyngeal				ḥ		ʕ	
glottal	ʔ			h			

The interdental /ṯ/ is written in cuneiform by the sign Š and sometimes by S (cf. Streck 2000, 214–215). In scholarly literature, /ṯ/ is transcribed with the sign {š}. This transcription was introduced by Gelb (1958, 150–151), as the phonetic interpretation of the Amorite

phonemes was yet unstudied. This graphemic transcription was retained in Gelb 1980 and Streck 2000 (cf. ibid., 218).

The Proto-Semitic voiceless alveolar lateral fricative /ś/ (/ŝ/) merged with /š/ (Gelb 1958, 150; Streck 2000, 221–227). The latter may have been pronounced as [s] (cf. Streck 2000, 226; Tropper 2001, 738–741; Streck 2011, 454). The transcription of this phoneme with the sign {Ś} was suggested by Goetze (1941, 134, note 61), and used by Gelb (1958) and (1980), because he reserved the sign {š} as transcription for the phoneme /t̲/. Streck (2000, 221–227) adopted Gelb's way of transcription (cf. Tropper 2001, 737). In the present article, the phonemic transcription {š} is employed. This transcription makes no statement about the pronunciation of the phoneme resulting from the merger, and it is used here to render the etymological correspondence between the Amorite and the Semitic phonemes.

In the phoneme /ṣ/, the Proto-Semitic /ṣ/, /ḍ/, and probably /ẓ/, merged. Gelb (1958, 150) assessed /ḍ/ as a phoneme but he did not count it in 1980. Gelb (1958, 150) also postulated /ẓ/ as a phoneme. He gave up this distinction in Gelb 1980 and regarded /ẓ/ as merged with [ṣ]. According to Streck (2000, 229), [ẓ] could have been distinctively preserved in Amorite (similarly already Goetze 1941, 134). This hypothesis gains typological support from the presence of this phoneme in Ugaritic (Tropper 2001, 738, note 2). However, Streck (2000, 229) adopted Gelb's transcription of /ẓ/ with the sign {ṣ}. In this article, an ambivalent transcription {ẓ/ṣ} is used in the lexemes.

The root-initial /w/ became /y/ but there are some examples where /w/ is retained (cf. below under weak verbs).

The vowel inventory of Amorite consists of the phonemes /a/, /i/, /u/, /ā/, /ī/, /ū/, /a/ and /i/ have an allophone [e]. The diphthongs /aw/ and /ay/ are mostly preserved. Cf. Streck (2000, 176 and 192) about monophthongization. There is no evidence for the vowel /o/. Amorite phonology is described in Streck (2000, 151–256).

Morphology

Since the Amorite linguistic material proper, as opposed to the loanwords, is restricted to personal names, the inventory of morphological forms is confined to what is used and attested in the onomasticon. Many forms and paradigms do not appear in personal names because of the semantic restrictions of the onomasticon. At the same time, the Amorite onomasticon contains forms unattested in later West-Semitic onomastic corpora. For instance, the syllabic writing of Amorite names has preserved many adjective forms that are indiscernible in other West-Semitic onomastica. The morphological and lexical variety within Amorite names is much higher than that of other West-Semitic corpora, e.g. Ancient Hebrew. The richness of Amorite forms is also influenced by the Akkadian onomasticon, whose form variety is unsurpassed by other Semitic onomastic corpora.

Pronouns

Independent

Only the 3rd person sg. is attested: masc. *šū*: *Šū-mālika* "He is counsellor";[5] fem. *šī*: *Šī-rāma* "She is lofty".[6]

Possessive

1st person sg. *-ī*: *ʔAbī-rām* "My father is lofty";[7] *ʔAbba-ʔilī* "Abba is my god".[8] After a vowel, it is *-ya*: *Liya-ʔel* "God is for me".[9] In the accusative position, it is *-ni*: *Šimaʕ-ni-ʔel* "Listen to me, o god!".[10]

2nd person sg. *-ka*: *ʔIla-laka* "God is for you".[11]

1st person pl. *-na*: *Lana-ʔel* "God is for us".[12]

The possessive pronouns of the third person masc. and fem. are not attested, in contrast to what was assumed in older studies (cf. Golinets 2010).

Relative or Demonstrative

ḏū: *Ḏū-ʕadnim* "The one/that of pleasure".[13]

Noun

Gender

The noun has, as in all Semitic languages, two morphological genders. The masculine is unmarked. The feminine has the suffix *-at* with the allomorphs *-a* and *-t*. The full form appears before case suffixes, the form *-a* is the pausal form. The suffix *-t* appears in the noun **bint* "daughter"[14] and after a vowel syncope, which could be influenced by Akkadian: *Dulluqatum* and *Dulluqtum*[15] (cf. Streck 2000, 311–316).

Number

The plural is not attested in the names, which is not unexpected from the standpoint of onomastical semantics. The arguments of Knudsen (1982, 11) in favour of the masculine plural morpheme were refuted by Streck (2000, 306–308).

The feminine plural is attested in two Amorite loanwords in Akkadian where it is formed according to the broken plural of *QaTL* nouns (cf. Streck 2000, 127): *rababātu* "ten thousand" (cf. Streck 2000, 111, 127); *ṣamarātu* "sheep of a wool-producing type" (cf. Golinets 2016b, 63).

The dual is probably attested in the geographic name *Dumtā/ēn* "Two towers" (cf. Streck 2000, 306).

State

Three status are attested in the personal names: status rectus, status absolutus and status constructus. The status rectus bears the case ending and mimation *-um* (in the nominative), e.g. *ʕAmmum-rāpiʔ* "The paternal uncle is a healing one".[16]

Nouns in the construct state bear the nominative case ending *-u*. This ending may drop in monosyllabic nouns, but it may also be preserved, cf. *Mut-dagan* and *Mutu-dagan* "Man of Dagan"[17] (Streck 2000, 300).

The ending *-i* that is sometimes attested on nouns in the construct state can be explained as assimilation of *-u* before the /y/ of the nomen regens,[18] or as a gliding sound, or due

to the elision of /ʔ/ (Streck 2000, 301–302). Tropper (2001, 743) suggested analysing this /i/ as a morpheme of a nominative constructus, comparable to the so called *Ḥireq compaginis* in Biblical-Hebrew personal names (cf. Golinets 2016a about the latter). However, if this /i/ were the status constructus morpheme, it would appear much more frequently and not only in the phonological environments described by Streck.

The status absolutus bears no case ending. It appears 1. as subject; 2. as a predicative noun or adjective; 3. as genitive; 4. as vocative. Cf. 1. *ʏatra-ʔil* "The god is excellent";[19] 2. *Ḏimr-šamaš* "Šamaš is shelter"[20] and *Dagan-yapuʕ* "Dagan is luminous";[21] 3. *ʕAbdi-ʔel* "Slave of god";[22] 4. *Ṯūb-na-ʔil* "Turn to face, o god!".[23] Such examples are not numerous, and this usage may be conditioned by specific lexemes or by the morphological forms used in the names, since many of these examples feature verbal adjectives as the subject or predicate.[24]

The status absolutus may also feature the suffix *-a* that should be distinguished from the accusative suffix (cf. Streck 2013, 309–315). The status absolutus in *-a* parallels the use of the vowelless status absolutus and it also appears 1. on the subject; 2. on predicative nouns or adjectives; 3. on nouns in the genitive; 4. on nouns in vocative position: 1. *ʔIla-baʕlum* "The god is the lord";[25] 2. *Bau-ʔila* "Bau is god"[26] and *ʏatra-ʔil* (cf. above); 3. *Bin-ʔila* "Son of the god";[27] 4. *Kūn-ʔila* "Be reliable, o god!"[28] (cf. Streck 2000, 272–276).

Case

In the Amorite personal names, only the nominative and the genitive are broadly attested. Since the West-Semitic personal names with verbal sentences are formed of two elements (the particles and prepositions are not counted), they do not mention the direct objects of the verbs that the names contain (cf. Golinets 2010, 608–609; Streck 2014, 294). The accusative is attested only in the name *Šimaʕ-ʔila-ʕanê(m)* "Hear, o god, the humble!" (Streck 2014).

The nominative has the suffix *-u*, cf. *ʕAmmum-rāpiʔ* above. The genitive has the suffix *-i*, cf. *ʕAbdu-baʕlati* "Slave of the mistress".[29] The morphological marker of the accusative, according to typological considerations, must be *-a*.

If the subject of a sentence or the nomen rectum is a theophorus element, the syntactic relation may be unmarked, and the noun features the "zero ending": *ʏaṯūb-lím* "The clan/Lîm has turned to face",[30] *ʕAbdi-yaraḫ* "Slave of Yaraḫ"[31] (cf. Streck 2013, 311).

Noun Patterns

Besides the primary nouns of different noun patterns like *ʔab-* "father", *ʔabn-* "stone", *ʕagal-* "calf", *ǧazāl-* "gazelle", *yamīn-* "right side" that belong to the basic vocabulary, a number of verbal adjectives is attested in the Amorite onomasticon (see below). The onomastic context has not preserved all types of noun patterns that once existed in the language. For instance, no noun pattern with the prefix *ta-* is attested. The nominal patterns are described in Streck (2000, 319–356); the verbal adjectives are described in Golinets (2018, 140–165, 168–169, 186, 193–197, 201–203, 239–261, 262, 302–305, 317–319, 339–346, 349–352).

Adjective

There are five patterns of verbal adjectives in the G-stem: *QaTaL*, *QaTiL*, *QaTuL*, *QuTāL* and *QuTīL*. For the verbal adjectives of other stems, cf. the table of verbal derivation below. The examples for the first four patterns are: masc. *Ḥakamāya*, fem. *Ḥakamatum* "Wise";[32] masc. *Šapirum*, fem. *Šapiratum* "Beautiful";[33] masc. *Maruṣāya*, fem. *Maruṣatum* "Careful";[34] masc. *Šulāmum* "Friendly";[35] fem. *Rukābatum* "Ridden".[36] *QuTīL* is attested only with the root ḤNN: masc. *Ḥunīnānum*, fem. *Ḥunīna*[37] (cf. Golinets 2018, 346).

Verb

The variety of verbal forms preserved in the Amorite onomasticon is confined in comparison to languages attested in literary texts, both as far as the inflection and derivation are concerned. The attested morphological forms and derivation patterns are as in Table 10.2:

Table 10.2 Amorite verbal forms.

		G-stem	*Gt-stem*	*D-stem*	*Š-stem*	*Št-stem*
Preterite						
3ms		*yVQTVL*	*yaQtaTaL*	*yaQaTTiL*	–	*yaštaQTiL*
3fs		*taQTVL*	*taQtaTaL*	–	–	–
1cs		*ʔaQūL*	–	–	–	–
Precative						
3ms		*laQTVL*	–	–	–	–
Imperative						
2ms		*QuT(u)L*	*QitTaL*	–	–	*šataQTiL*
		QiTaL	–	–	–	–
		QūL(a)	–	–	–	–
Participle, active	ms	*QāTiLum*	–	*muQaTTiLum*	–	–
	fs	*QāTiLa(t-um)*	–	*muQaTTiLa(t-um)*	–	–
Participle, passive	ms	*QaTīL*	–	*muQaTTaLum*	–	–
	fs	*QaTīLa(t)*	–	–	–	–
	ms	*QiTīL*	–	–	–	–
	fs	*QiTīLa*	–	–	–	–
	ms	*QaTūL*	–	–	–	–
	fs	*QaTūLa*	–	–	–	–
Stative	3ms	*QaTaL*	–	–	–	–
	3fs	*QaT(a)La*	–	–	–	–

Table 10.2 (Continued)

		G-stem	*Gt-stem*	*D-stem*	*Š-stem*	*Št-stem*
Verbal adjectives	ms	*QaTiLum*	*QataTLum*	*Qa/uTTuLum*	*šaQTaLum*	–
	fs	*QaTiLa(tum)*	*QataTLa(t-um)*	*QuTTuLa(tum)*	*šaQTaLatum*	–
	ms	*QaTuLum*	–	–	–	–
	fs	*QaTuLa(tum)*	–	–	–	–
	ms	*QuTāLum*	–	–	–	–
	fs	*QuTāLa(tum)*	–	–	–	–
	ms	*QuTīLum*	–	–	–	–
	fs	*QuTīLa*	–	–	–	–

Inflection

In the finite verbs, only singular forms of the 3rd masc. and fem., and 1st person sg. c. are attested. The prefixes are, *ya-*, *ta-*, *ʔa-* (cf. below), respectively. The form *yu-*, attested in two spellings of the name *Ɣumraṣ-ʔel* "The god took care",[38] is an allomorph of *ya-*, with the vowel */u/* conditioned by the following labial. This form cannot be assigned to any particular dialect (cf. Golinets 2018, 40). The prefix *yi-* is another phonetically conditioned allomorph of *ya-*, while the prefix *ʔi-* is an Akkadism (cf. Streck 2000, 187, 189).

The only attested finite form is the preterite *yaQTuL* that denotes activities in the past. The present tense of the Akkadian type (*yaQaTTVL*) is not attested, contrary to what has been assumed in older studies (cf. Golinets 2018, 87–98). Similarly, contrary to older studies, no traces of the *H*-stem could be found within the onomastically attested forms. As far as the latter is concerned, there is no evidence for the alleged causative morpheme *ha-*. The vowel *i* in the second syllable, like e.g. in *Ɣarkib=addu* < **Ɣarkib-haddu* "Haddu has ridden",[39] originates from the stem vowel *i* which is attested in the G-stem alongside *u* in the same verb, cf. *Ɣarkab-haddu*.[40] This variation in the stem vowel is broadly attested within Amorite names, and the forms cannot be attributed to different verbs or to a specific verb with different semantic nuances (cf. Golinets 2018, 57, 68, 115–116, 118–119, 336).

The morpheme *QaTaL* denotes conditions of the grammatical subject and has the same meaning as the Akkadian stative in the G-stem. In the strong verb, the overwhelming majority of examples of the stative, in which the verbs can be easily identified on a lexico-semantic level, belong to stative verbs, e.g. *Baʕlī-šapar* "My lord is beautiful".[41] With a dynamic-transitive verb, the meaning is passive: *Šakanum* "Settled one".[42]

Weak Verb

The cuneiform orthography does not always denote long vowels or the etymological /ʔ/, which makes the reconstruction of the verbal morphology of weak verbs a difficult task.

Some verbs are attested both in strong and weak forms as is shown in Table 10.3, but no dialectal differentiation can be reasonably drawn (cf. Golinets 2018, 175, 321):

Table 10.3 Weak verbs in Amorite.

	Preterite	*Precative*	*Imperative*	*Participle*	*Stative*
I-ʔ	*yaʔmur*	*laʔmur*	–	–	–
II-ʔ	*yarʔib*	–	–	*rāʔib*	–
III-ʔ	*yarpaʔ*	–	–	*nābiʔ*	–
I-y	*yawṣiʔ*	–	–	–	–
	yayṣiʔ, *ʔiṣiʔ*	–	–	–	*yatar*
II-w/y	*yakūn*	*lakīn*	*kūn*	*ṯāb*	*kīn*
III-y/w	*yabnī*	*laḫwī*	–	*bānī*	*laʔī*
I-n	*yantin*, *yattin*	–	–	*nāqim*	–
II/III-n	*yaḫun*(*n*)	*laḫun*(*n*)	*ḫun*(*n*)	–	*ḫan*(*a*)*n*

I-ʔ and III-ʔ. Most spellings do not note /ʔ/, which means that it could have been contracted with the preceding vowel. The spellings with /ʔ/ and parallels from the II-ʔ suggest that these verbs were treated as strong ones, cf. *ʔAnnu-nābiʔ* "Annu is calling (the name)".[43] For the roots II-ʔ, only the prefix conjugation form of the verb RʔB "to replace" is attested. The second radical is very often written *plene*, e.g. in the preterite *Yarʔib-ʔel* "God has replaced";[44] participle *Rāʔibum*.[45] It can be said that this verb exhibits strong morphology. The verbs I-ʔ which are at the same time II-W exhibit the strong inflection of the first radical, cf. *Yaʔūš-ʔel* "God has presented".[46]

I-w/y. The root-initial /w/ became /y/ in most examples, but there are some forms where /w/ is retained. The roots YṮB and YṢʔ have the by-forms WṮB and WṢʔ: cf. *Yawṭibu* and *Yawṣiʔ-ʔel* "God has appeared".[47] In the forms I-y two forms are distinguishable: *yayTiL* and *ʔiTiL*, cf. *Yayṣiʔ-ʔel* and *ʔIṣiʔ-ʔel* "God has appeared"[48] (cf. Streck 2011, 457; Golinets 2018, 212, 230–237).

II-w. All morphological forms of these verbs are inflected with a long vowel in place of the middle radical. The length of the vowel, however, is noted in the spellings only in few forms (cf. Golinets 2018, 263). The strong inflection is attested in the D-stem, cf. the verbal adjective *Kuwwunum*.[49]

III-w. The long final vowel of the forms of this root type may have been secondary shortened (like in Akkadian).

I-n. Both strong and weak forms of the preterite of the roots NBʔ, NQM, NṢB, NẔR (or NṢR), NTN are attested. The participle, of course, is inflected in the strong way.

II/III. The forms of roots *mediae geminatae* exhibit weak inflection of some forms, cf. *Yaḫnun-ʔel* and *Yaḫun*(*n*)*-ʔel* "The god was merciful".[50]

Verbal Derivation

Strong Verb: G-stem

The G-stem is the most broadly attested one. It also has the biggest array of different morphological forms. Preterite: 3rd masc. sg. *Yabḫar-haddu* "Haddu has chosen";[51] 3rd fem. sg. *Tašmaʃ-mama* "Mama has heard";[52] 1st sg. c. *ʔAṯūb-la-ʔel* "I have turned to the god".[53]

Precative: *Aḫī-laplaṭ* "Let my brother live".[54] Imperative: *Šimaʃ-ni-ʔel* "Listen to me, o god!".[55]

Participle, active: masc. *ʃĀḏir-šamaš* "Šamaš is helping";[56] fem. *ʃĀḏiratum*;[57] passive: masc. *Baḫīrum* and *Biḫīrum*,[58] fem. *Biḫīra*[59] "Chosen"; masc. *Ḏamūrān* "Protected";[60] fem. *Nadūba*[61] "Generously given".

Stative: masc. *ʃAṯtar-kabar* "Aštar is great";[62] fem. *ʔIšḫara-kabrat* "Išḫara is great"[63] (cf. above the explanation of the meaning of the morpheme *QaTaL*).

Gt-stem

This stem conveys passive meaning. It has only few forms with several attestations. Preterite: 3rd masc. sg. *Yantaqim* "He has been avenged";[64] 3rd fem. Sg. *Taʔtamar* "She has been seen".[65] Imperative: *Hitlal-dagan* "Praise Dagan!"[66] Verbal adjective: masc. *Bataḫrum*, fem. *Bataḫra* "Chosen".[67]

D-stem

The preterite is attested only in the name *ʔIbaššir* "He has brought good tidings" (BŠR < Sem. *BŚR).[68] The forms of the verbs *mediae vocalis* like *yakīn*, *yarīm*, *lakīn* that Streck (2002, 190 and 2011, 456) tentatively assigned to the D-stem, belong to the G-stem (Golinets 2018, 272). Participle, active: *Muqaddimu*.[69] Participle, passive: *Mukassayum* (KSY).[70] Verbal adjective: *Šulluḫum* "Sent";[71] fem. *Šuppurtum* "Very beautiful".[72]

Š-stem

This stem is attested only in a small number of verbal adjectives, e.g. masc. *Šaklalu* "Perfect(ly made)"[73] (cf. Golinets, 2018, 204–207).

Lexicon

The lexicon of the Amorite language is attested by some 90 loanwords in Akkadian texts (Streck 2000, 83–125) and in personal and geographic names. The loanwords belong, among others, to the following semantic domains (cf. Streck 2000, 123–124).

- Kinship terms, e.g. *yabam-u* "brother-in-law".
- Nomadic way of life, e.g. *sakān-u* "to settle down".

- Social structures of the nomadic life, e.g. *ǧayy-u* and *lîm-u* (*liʔm-u*) "clan"; *sugāgūt-u* "office of a sheikh".
- Razzia and military activities, e.g. *sadād-u* "to make a razzia"; *ṯaʕān-u* "to wound".
- Law or juridical institutions of the nomadic life, e.g. *ṯapāṭ-u* "to judge"; *yālūt-u* "alliance".
- Topography, e.g. *ʔaḫarat-u* and *ʔaqdamat-u* "rear and front shore of a river".
- Cattle breeding, e.g. *baqr-u* "cattle, cow"; *ḥayyat-u* "animals".

The onomastic context has preserved only those nouns and verbs that, due to their semantics, are permissible in the names. This means that the verification of a lexeme should be guided not only by etymological, but also by onomastic considerations. Our knowledge of onomastically attested segments of the Amorite lexicon is delimited not only by the number and variety of names, but also by the progress of etymological and onomastic research. Further studies will discover and recognize "new" Amorite lexemes.

As far as the verbal lexemes are concerned, the verbs that have no etymological counterparts in Akkadian are certainly Amorite. To this category belong e.g. the following roots (cf. Golinets 2018, 357): ʔWŠ "to make a present"; ʕDN "to be delightful"; ʕḎR "to help"; ʕMS "to carry"; ʕQB "to protect"; ḎMR "to guard"; ḤYY "to live"; RḤB "to broaden"; ŠKR "to reward".

The onomastically attested verbs belong to the following semantic domains:

- "To be or prove oneself strong, firm, big", e.g. ʕZZ "to be mighty"; ḤZQ "to be strong"; KBR "to be great"; KWN "to be firm"; RBY "to be big"; RWM "to be high".
- "To be or prove oneself alive, vivid", e.g. ĠZR "to be rich"; ḤYY "to live"; KṮR "to be successful"; PLṬ "to be alive".
- "To be or prove oneself kind, fair, righteous, precious", e.g. ḤKM "to be wise"; NDB and ŠLM "to be friendly"; ṢDQ "to be righteous", ṬWB "to be kind"; YQR "to be precious"; YTR "to be outstanding".
- "To perceive and response", e.g. ʔMR "to look at"; ḎKR "to remember"; ḤḎY "to behold"; ŠMʕ (< Sem. *ŠMʕ) "to hear"; YDʕ "to know".
- "To create, build" (i.e. the name bearer), e.g. BNY "to create"; ḎRʕ "to sow"; ḎRY "to beget"; NṬʕ "to plant"; QNY "to acquire".
- "To give, send, bestow, set" (i.e. the name bearer), e.g. NṢB "to erect"; NTN "to give"; PQD "to hand over"; ŠLḪ (< Sem. *ŠLḪ) and ṬRD "to send"; ŠYM (< *Sem. *ŚYM) "to set"; ŠYT (< Sem. *ŠYT) "to place".
- "To protect, guard, preserve", e.g. ḤṢN "to protect"; BḤR "to choose"; ḪBʔ "to hide"; NẔR/NṢR "to guard"; STR "to conceal".
- "To help, carry, lead", e.g. ʕḎR "to help"; ʕMS "to carry"; NŠʔ (< Sem. *NŚʔ) "to accept"; ŠQL (< Sem. *ŠQL) "to bear"; YṮʕ "to help, save".
- "To judge, reward", e.g. DYN, RYB, ṬPṬ "to judge"; NQM "to avenge"; ŠKR (< Sem. *ŚKR) "to reward".
- "To love, bless, be merciful", e.g. ḤBB, ḤMD, YDD "to love"; ḤNN and RḤM "to be merciful"; KRB "to bless"; RPʔ "to heal".

- Depictions of conditions of a deity being metaphors of deity's attention to the name bearer or his or her parents, e.g. ḌRḤ "to arise"; NGH "to blaze"; QWM "to stand up"; ṢḤQ "to laugh"; RKB "to ride, ascend".

The nouns preserved in the Amorite names have literary or metaphorical meaning in the onomastic context. Some of the nouns were employed as an epithet of a deity. Many of the nouns were also used in other Semitic onomastica and they belong to the following semantic domains:

- Environment, e.g. *ʔūr-* and *nīr-* "light"; *ʔabn-* "stone"; *kabkab-* "star"; *nār-* and *nahar-* "river"; *šamš-* "sun"; *qatr-* and *ʒ/ṣūr-* "rock".
- Anatomical terms, e.g. *ḏaqan-* "beard"; *ḏunab-* "tail"; **pû-*, in status constuctus *pī-* "mouth"; *qarn-* "horn"; *ṯakim-* "shoulder".
- Kinship terms, e.g. *ʔab-* "father"; *ʔaḫ-* "brother"; *ʔumm-* "mother"; *ʕamm-* "paternal uncle"; *bin-* "son"; *dad-* "uncle"; *ḫāl-* "maternal uncle"; *yatām-* "orphan".
- Terms of social relationship, e.g. *ʔi/el-* "god"; *ʕabd-* "slave"; *baʕl-* "lord"; *baʕl-at-* "mistress"; *šugāg-* "sheikh".
- Animal names, e.g. *ʕar(a)d-(at-)* "wild ass"; *yaʕil-a(t-)* "ibex"; *yamāma* "pigeon"; *ʕimmar-* "lamb" (the faunal terms are treated in Golinets 2016b).
- Deverbal nouns from verbs denoting activities of a deity on behalf of the name bearer or his or her parents (cf. Streck 2000, 322 –323), e.g. *ʕa/uzz-* "strength" (ʕZZ); *ḏikr-* "remembrance" (ḌKR); *ḏimr-*, *sitr-*, *nuʒ/ṣr-* "shelter" (ḌMR, STR, NẔR or NṢR); *niqm-* "vengeance"; *pils-* "sight" (PLS); *raḥm-* "mercy" (RḤM).
- Deverbal nouns of *maQTaL* and *mi/eQTiL* patterns. These forms denote place or result of the action described by the corresponding verb, e.g. *mantin-* "gift" (NTN), *miškir-* "reward" (ŠKR); *mešlim-* "friendliness" (ŠLM); *mašmiʕ-* "hearing" (ŠMʕ); *menīḫ-* "place of rest" (NWḪ) (cf. Streck 2000, 336–339; 2011, 455).

There are also some prepositions and particles attested in the names. Preposition *la* "for", e.g. in *Laḥwī-la-na* "May he live for us!".[74] Particles: *kī*, *la*, *ma*, *na* "truly", e.g. in *Yašīm-kī-ʔel* "God has truly set (i.e. the name-bearer)",[75] *Yantillâraḫ* < **Yantin-la-yaraḫ* "Yaraḫ has truly given",[76] *Ḥayya-ma-ʔel* "The god is truly alive,[77] *Yašīt-na-ʔabu* "The father has truly placed (i.e. the name-bearer)".[78] Precative particle *lū, e.g. in Lū-ḥayya* "May he live!".[79]

NOTES

1 Cf. Burke 2017 for a review of theoretical aspects of research about Amorites on the background of Middle Bronze Age climate change.
2 Cf. Streck (2000, 76–80); J. Sasson (1998, 102, note 17); Ziegler and Charpin (2007, 69–70); Streck (2013, 316–319).
3 Cf. Streck (2011, 453) where he refers to "about 17 800 names" studied in Streck 2000.

4 The short description of the Amorite grammar by Mugnaioni 2000 compiles data from older publications and is not an independent study.
5 *Su-ma-li-ka*, 5586. In the following, names are cited with their numbers according to the list in Gelb 1980. Names from the ARM series are cited with their instances.
6 *Ši-i-ra-ma*, 5521.
7 *A-bi-ra-am*, 125.
8 ^{d}*Ab-ba-ì-lí*, 601.
9 *Li-ia-el*, 4360.
10 *Ši-ma-aḫ-ni*-DINGIR, 5887.
11 *I-la-la-ka*, 2539.
12 *La-na*-AN, 4304.
13 *Du-ú-ḫa-ad-nim*, 6630.
14 *Bitti-dagan* "Daughter of Dagan" (*Bi-it-ti-*^{d}*da-gan*, 1240).
15 *Du-lu-ga-tum*, 1578; *Du-lu-uq-tum*, 1580.
16 *Ḫa-am-mu-um-ra-pi*, 1923.
17 *Mu-ut-*^{d}*da-gan*, 4847; *Mu-tu-*^{d}*da-gan*, 4811.
18 ʕ*Abdi-Yaraḫ* "Slave of Yaraḫ" (*Ab-di-a-ra-aḫ*, 613).
19 *Ja-at-ra-il*, 3853.
20 *Zi-me-ir-*^{d}UTU, 6563.
21 ^{d}*Da-gan-a-pu-uḫ*, 1440.
22 *Ḫa-ab-di-el*, 1829.
23 *Šu-ub-na-il*, 5959B.
24 Cf. examples in Streck (2000, 264 –269) cf. Streck (2013, 311).
25 *I-la-ba-lu-ú*, 2523.
26 *Ba-ú-i-la*, 1154.
27 *Bi-in-il-la*, 1291.
28 *Ku'-un-i-la*, 4168.
29 *Ḫa-ab-du-ba-aḫ-la-ti*, 1839.
30 *Ia-šu-ub-li-im*, 3513.
31 *Ḫa-ab-di-a-ra-aḫ*, 1825.
32 *Ḫa-ka-ma-a-ia* (feminine name); 2046; *ḫa-ka-ma-tum* (feminine name), 2047.
33 *Sa-bi-ru-um*, 5383, *Sa-pi-ra-tum*, 5497B.
34 *Ma-ru-za-ia* (feminine name); 4544, *Ma-ru-za-tu-ú* 4545.
35 *Su-la-mu-um*, 5572.
36 *Ru-ka-ba-tum* (feminine name), 5305.
37 *Ḫu-ni-na-nu-um*, 2316; *Ú-ni-na* (feminine name), 6181.
38 *Ju-um-ra-aṣ*-DINGIR, 3888; *Ju-um-ra-zi*-DINGIR, ARM 27, 83:7.
39 *Ia-ar-ki-ba-*^{d}IM, 3070.
40 *Ia-ar-ka-ab-*^{d}IM, 3069.
41 *Ba-aḫ-li-sa-pa-ar*, 1022.
42 *Sa-ka-nu-um*, 5395.
43 *An-nu-na-bi-iḫ* (feminine name), 826.
44 *Ia-ar-i-ib*-DINGIR, 3060.
45 *Ra-i-bu-um*, 5248.
46 *Ia-ú-uš*-DINGIR, 3578.
47 *Ia-aw-ši-bu*, 3133, and *Ia-ú-zi*-DINGIR, 3581.

48 *Ia-ṣi*-DINGIR, 3484, and *I-zi*-DINGIR, ARM 24, 244 ii 11.
49 *Ku-ú-nu-um*, 4147.
50 *Ia-nu-un*-DINGIR, 3394, and *Ia-ḫu-un*-DINGIR, 3267.
51 *Ia-ab-ḫa-ar*-^{d}IM, 2803.
52 *Ta-às-ma-aḫ*-^{d}*ma-ma*, ARM 22, 14 r iii 6.
53 *A-šu-ub-la-el*, 535.
54 *A-ḫi-la-ap-la-aṭ*, ARM 23, 438:17.
55 *Ši-ma-aḫ-ni*-DINGIR, 5887.
56 *Ḫa-zi-ir*-^{d}UTU, 2226.
57 *Ḫa-zi-ra-tum* (feminine name), ARM 23, 611:5'.
58 *Ba-i-rum*, 1076, and *Bi-ḫi-rum*, 1209.
59 *Bi-ḫi-ra* (feminine name), 1208.
60 *Za-mu-ra-an*, 6402.
61 *Na-du-ba* (feminine name), 4954.
62 EŠ$_4$.DAR-*ka-bar*, 1685.
63 ^{d}*Iš-ḫa-ra-ka-ab-ra-at*, ARM 23, 438:15.
64 *Ia-an-ta-ki-im*, 2980.
65 *Ta-aḫ-ta-mar*, 5970.
66 *Ḫi-it-làl*-^{d}*da-gan*, ARM 22, 12 iv 17; 14 iv 17.
67 *Ba-ta-aḫ-rum*, 1148, and *Ba-ta-aḫ-ra* (feminine name), 1145.
68 *I-ba-ás-si-ir*, 2397.
69 *Mu-ga-di-mu*, 4736.
70 *Mu-ka-sa-a-je-em* (in the accusative), 4742.
71 *Su-lu-ḫu-um*, 5576.
72 *Su-pu-ur-tum*, 5742.
73 *Sa-ak-la-lu*, ARM 22, 66:9.
74 *La-aḫ-wi-la-na*, 4223.
75 *Ia-si-im-ki*-DINGIR, 3465.
76 *Ia-an-ti-la-ra-aḫ*, 2991.
77 *Ḫa-ià-ma*-DINGIR, ARM 14, 93:8; 103:6.
78 *Ia-si-it-na-a-bu*, 3471.
79 *Lu-ḫa-a-ia*^{ki}, ARM 16/1:21.

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

Hurrian

Dennis R.M. Campbell

Introduction

Hurrian was spoken throughout much of the ancient Near East in the Bronze Age, especially across northern Mesopotamia and Syria and southeastern Anatolia. The Hurrians are thought to have entered into the Near East in a series of waves in the Early or Middle Bronze Age, however their place of origin is uncertain, likely originating from somewhere in the Caucasus Mountains to the north. While Hurrian population groups settled primarily in northern Mesopotamia and areas westward, the earliest evidence for the language is in the form of personal names from southern Mesopotamia in the final centuries of the third millennium.

Hurrian was unrelated to any of the other preserved languages of the Bronze Age. The language was quite distinct from the better known Semitic and Indo-European languages of the region. It was an agglutinative, case-marking language that functioned according to an ergative system. It was closely related to the Iron Age language of Urartian, the language of the ruling elite centered in the mountainous regions near Lake Van in Anatolia. It is likely that Hurrian belongs within the family of Caucasian languages (Smeets 1989 with bibliography), but where it fits on that linguistic branch is not clear. Hurrian speakers were in close contact with both Indo-Europeans and various Semitic groups, but there is little evidence for influence of any of these languages on Hurrian outside of lexical borrowings from Akkadian, and, in the Hurrian from Mittani, from Indo-Aryan. Akkadian was both the primary language of scribal education in the ancient Near East as well as the *lingua franca* of the region. Akkadian language texts written by native Hurrian speakers show clear Hurrian influence, creating a "mixed" language that has been termed Hurro-Akkadian (see chapter 7).

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Hurrian appears to have been spoken over a considerable portion of the ancient Near East. Despite several Hurrian language texts being discovered in Babylonia (southern Mesopotamia), it does not seem that it was commonly used in the region. Hurrian speakers were found in some numbers in Assyria (northern Mesopotamia), especially at sites such as Nuzi. The main concentration of Hurrian speakers in the Near East appears to have been in the Habur Triangle. The language was, however, used across all of ancient Syria, including at sites such as Alalakh and Ugarit and into the region of Kizzuwatna in southeastern Anatolia. It is from this region that most of the Hurrian language texts from the Hittite capital of Ḫattusa (Boğazköy) originated.

The Hurrians

The origin of the Hurrians is uncertain, although a homeland somewhere in the Caucasus Mountains seems highly probable. Hurrian names appear by the Akkad Empire (c. 2330–2190 BCE), but this is simply the *terminus ante quem* for their movement into the Near East. It has been postulated that the Sumerian word ta/ibira from the Early Dynastic III period is a borrowing from Hurrian, but this has been contested (Wilhelm 1988, 50–51; Edzard 1999, 148 n. 1). This casts doubt on Hurrian migration before the Akkadian period. Upon entering into the Near East, Hurrian population groups appear to have been largely centered in northern Mesopotamia, especially the Habur region, Syria, and into southeastern Anatolia. Textual evidence indicates that in certain regions Hurrians represented either a significant or even the majority population group.

It is likely that the Hurrians entered into the Near East in waves. One group entered the region at a later time (date uncertain), and eventually formed the ruling elite of the Mittani Empire. The language of the Mittani court and the names of Mittani kings indicates that this Hurrian group had, at some point, interactions with an Indo-Aryan group. Certain divine names from the Mittani pantheon, as represented in Hittite treaties, are also Indo-Aryan (e.g. Mitra/Mithras). Early Hurrian texts do not display any borrowings from Indo-Aryan, providing support for the theory that the Hurrians that ruled Mittani were a distinct group.

Hurrian Dialects and Textual Evidence

That there are different Hurrian dialects represented in the textual material is certain, and it is also expected given the nearly thousand year period over which the language was written (e.g. Diakonoff 1981). Making sense of the dialects is much more difficult, however, due to the extreme paucity of material for the first six or seven hundred years. Dialectical differences are primarily evident in the verbal system, with verbal conjugation in the younger Mittani Letter from Amarna (EA 24, ca. fourteenth century BC) differing from the earliest Hurrian texts. The nominal system appears to be remarkably consistent for all periods, but this may be misleading since the earliest texts, especially the Old Babylonian texts from Mari and southern Mesopotamia are so difficult to understand. One can conventionally speak of an "Old Hurrian" dialect and a younger "Mittani" dialect.

Distribution of Hurrian Texts

The earliest evidence for Hurrians is in the form of personal and geographic names, all from northern Mesopotamian locales, found in texts dated to the Akkad Period (ca. 2330–2190 BCE). The earliest Hurrian language text, the Tiš-atal inscription, is dated either to the Akkad Period (Parrot and Nougayrol 1948) or, perhaps more likely, to the subsequent Ur III period (Salvini 1998, 107). The text is a dedicatory inscription for the founding of the temple of Nergal at the site of Urkeš (modern Tel Mozan) carved on a stone tablet with an accompanying bronze lion peg (Parrot and Nougayrol 1948; Wilhelm 1998). This short, twenty-eight word long inscription contains a non-grammatical, formulaic introduction (Wilhelm 1998, 122–123; Wegner 2007, 234; *pace* Diakonoff 1971, 111 n. 123) followed by several sentences conforming to known Hurrian morpho-syntactic rules.

Hurrian texts are somewhat better represented in the Old Babylonian period, with several from southern Mesopotamia and six from Mari. The southern Mesopotamian texts, which include approximately ten from the region of Larsa (most recently Prechel and Richter 2001), are religious in nature. These texts are extremely difficult to read, to the point that certain identification of the works as Hurrian is not always possible. The Mari material is also quite difficult. It consists of five rituals and one letter. These texts are problematic due to problems of lexicon, grammar, and, in some cases, preservation. One ritual text, Mari 5 clearly concerns a dental issue (Campbell and Fischer 2018), while another one, Mari 1, contains the Akkadian label *šipat tultim* "incantation of the worm," likely also marking it as concerning issues with the teeth. The letter, Mari 7+6 (Salvini 1988; Wegner 2004), references Zimri-Lim, the king of Mari, as well as the gods of Kumme, the cultic home of the Hurrian Stormgod Teššub. It is likely that the Mari texts belonged to an enclave of Hurrian speaking individuals who originated from a northern location.

The majority of Hurrian language texts date to the Late Bronze Age and were discovered in northern Syria and, in the greatest numbers, at the Hittite capital in central Anatolia. One of the most important Hurrian texts is the so-called "Mittani Letter," or EA 24. This long, four column tablet (over 400 lines of text), belongs to the Amarna corpus discovered at the site of Akhetaten (Tel el-Amarna) in Egypt. It is a letter from Tušratta, the king of Mittani, to the Egyptian pharaoh Amenhotep III (recent translations: Wilhelm 2014; Dietrich and Mayer 2010). The letter concerns the marriage of Tušratta's daughter Tado-Ḫeba to the pharaoh as well as political issues. The letter was carefully crafted and uses what appears to be a chancellery script along with regularized orthographic techniques to represent Hurrian-specific phonemes.

A variety of Hurrian texts have been discovered at the coastal site of Ugarit (Ras Šamra) written in both syllabic and alphabetic cuneiform. The latter type is restricted to religious texts, while the former is used for several genres, including lexical texts, wisdom literature, musical texts, and letters. The alphabetic texts are quite difficult to translate, in part due to the lack of expressed word-internal and final vowels. These texts have been useful for determining Hurrian phonology (Friedrich 1935, 128–131; Speiser 1940, 319–320).

Among the syllabic texts, the lexical lists have proven to be invaluable for our ability to translate Hurrian. Two lists, S^a and ur_5(ḪAR)-ra = *ḫubullu* have been discovered at the site. Several examples of polyglot S^a texts have been discovered at Ugarit, some being trilingual (Sumerian-Akkadian-Hurrian), and others quadrilingual, adding a column for

Ugaritic. There is one example of the ḪAR-ra = *ḫubullu* list at the site (Thureau-Dangin 1931, 234–249). The Hurrian column of this text is extremely difficult due to numerous *hapax legomena* and atypical grammatical forms, and may represent a distinct dialect (Friedrich 1939–1942, 91–92). The single wisdom text from Ugarit, RS 15.010, is bilingual, containing eight lines of Akkadian and eleven lines of Hurrian (Wilhelm 2003). The musical texts, while mostly very fragmentary, contain both Hurrian lyrics and musical notation in Hurrianized Akkadian. One of the letters, RS 11.853, is published (Laroche 1955, 327–329). The presence of these Hurrian texts at Ugarit likely indicates that at least some Hurrian speaking people lived at the site (Vita 2009, 225–228).

The largest collection of Hurrian language texts comes from the Hittite capital of Hattusa (modern Boğazköy). Several hundred fragments, ranging from mostly preserved tablets to small pieces, have been discovered at various locations at the site, especially in the citadel storage building Büyükkale A and in Temple I. A further collection of Hurrian texts have been discovered at the Hittite site of Sapinuwa (modern Ortaköy), although these too are fragmentary (Süel 1998, 555–556). It is likely that most of the Hurrian language texts found at Hittite sites were imported, likely from Kizzuwatna, with later copies of some being made by Hittite scribes. The most important phase of the importation of Hurrian texts to Hattusa can be dated to the early New Kingdom (c. 1400–1350), a period of Hittite reemergence that ultimately resulted in their becoming one of the major powers of the ancient Near East (Klinger 2001). The reign of Tudhaliya I/II saw increased interactions between the Hittites and Kizzuwatna, beginning with parity relations and ending with Kizzuwatna being annexed to the growing Hittite empire. From this time onward, Hittite kings bore two names, one Hittite and one Hurrian (Beal 2002). The first wave of the importation of Hurrian texts likely reached its acme during the reign of Tudhaliya III and his Hurrian-named queen, Tadoḫeba. It is unclear if Hurrian texts were brought in by the next three kings, Suppiluliuma I, Mursili II, and Muwatalli II. Muwatalli's brother, Hattusili III, usurped the throne from his nephew Urhi-Teššob/Mursili III. Hattusili's wife, Pudoḫeba, was the daughter of a Kizzuwatnean priest, and according to colophons, she was responsible for bringing the (*ḫ*)*išuwa* festival texts from Kizzuwatna into the Hittite capital. The (*ḫ*)*išuwa* festival texts are largely made up of prescriptive descriptions of the festival written in Hittite, with very short (one to two sentences) Hurrian incantations. If these texts are indicative of the kinds of documents being imported in this second wave, then the amount of Hurrian language material brought in during the reign of Hattusili III was minimal in comparison to the first wave. Some Hurrian language material was brought into the Hittite capital at an earlier period (Wilhelm 2010a), but it appears unlikely that they represent a systematic attempt to introduce Hurrian to the Hittite world.

The Hurrian material from the Hittite kingdom is almost exclusively religious in nature. The sole secular text is the fragment of a Hurrian letter discovered at Kayalıpınar, Kp 05/226 (Wilhelm 2006). The majority of texts contain incantations and ritual proceedings, often purificatory in nature, such as the *itkalzi* "mouth washing" ritual (Strauß 2006, 149–188; de Martino and Süel 2015). There is also a prayer by the queen Tadoḫeba, KUB 32.19 = ChS I/1 41, which is one of the longest monolingual Hurrian texts (Singer

2002, 43–44). A series of oracle texts in Hurrian are known, but are extremely difficult to translate (de Martino 1992; Wilhelm 2010a). Coincident with the first wave of Hurrian importation, is the appearance of Hurrian mythological texts. Most extant examples of Hurrian mythology are in the form of Hittite translations. However, some fragments of Hurrian language versions exist. This includes parts of the Kumarbi Cycle, the Kešši myth, and Gilgameš (Salvini 1977).

In 1983, a series of bilingual Hurrian-Hittite texts comprising the Song of Release and related parables were discovered at Hattusa. These texts have been extremely important for the decipherment of Hurrian, providing scholars with new lexical items and elucidating some difficult grammatical points. Each tablet is bilingual, containing both the Hurrian and the Hittite translation, either side-by-side in columns or in alternating paragraphs (Neu 1996). The texts have been interpreted as belonging to one long document (Neu 1996), but more likely the collection consists of the Song of Release, a myth concerning the destruction of the city Ebla for disobeying the Stormgod Teššub, as well as parables that may be thematically related to the myth (de Martino 2012).

A further corpus of Hurrian texts has been discovered at the site of Emar (modern Meskene) on the middle Euphrates. These texts have been recently published in transcription, and they apparently belong to a few different genres. This includes a version of the lexical list AN = *anum* (Salvini 2015). Most of the texts are religious in nature, including rituals and omina. A fragment of a Hurrian duplicate to the Instructions of Šuruppak is also known from Emar (Wilhelm 2005). These texts are very difficult to translate, containing numerous words for which we have no clear translations, and their grammar, while similar to that of Ugarit and Hattusa, displays some peculiarities.

Sketch of Hurrian Grammar

The following is but a brief sketch of Hurrian grammar and is only meant to provide a brief overview of the main features of Hurrian. The structure of Hurrian is very different from the better known Semitic and Indo-European languages of the ancient Near East, and while much of its grammar is understood, there are still numerous questions to be answered. For more thorough coverage of the language, the reader should look at the works of Giorgieri (2000) and Wegner (2007).

Ergativity

One of the important characteristics of Hurrian is its high degree of morphological ergativity (Plank 1988). The language almost exclusively utilizes an ergative system, with non-ergative morphosyntax only being found in the modal system. In a case-marking ergative language, the subject of intransitive verbs and the patients of transitive verbs are identically marked, in Hurrian by the –Ø absolutive case. Agents of transitive verbs appear in the ergative case, Hurrian –*ž*. With certain modal forms we find split-ergativity, with agents of transitives in the absolutive case. Hurrian does not appear to have ergative syntax, but rather has a mixed syntactic structure (see Hazenbos 2010).

Hurrian Phonology

Recreating the phonology of any ancient language is a challenge, which holds especially true for a language such as Hurrian (Wilhelm 1983). Scholars have combined the regularized orthography of the Mittani Letter with the alphabetic Hurrian texts from Ugarit to obtain a general idea of the Hurrian phonological system. It must be kept in mind that the representation of Hurrian sounds was constrained by the limits of the cuneiform writing system, which, for example, distinguishes voiced and voiceless consonants. It is clear that Hurrian distinguished between different consonantal sounds according to positional rules (see below). As such, in bound transcription of Hurrian, the convention is to represent consonants as either voiced or voiceless, even though this may not represent the actual phonetic shape of the language.

Vowels

Hurrian appears to have had five vowels (/a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, and /u/) with at least two lengths, short and long (written plene and hyperplene in cuneiform, and with a macron in bound transcription). In the Mittani Letter there is some variance between the enclitic pronouns =*ma*= and =*me*= and =*lla* and =*lle* with seemingly little discernable pattern of vowel distribution. For this reason */a/* in at least some cases appears to have been close to */e/* and may have been more of a */ə/*. Outside of the Mittani Letter texts make little distinction between */e/* and */i/* (Giorgieri and Wilhelm 1995). The scribe of the Mittani Letter consistently used the signs Ú and U to write specific roots and morphemes. The Ú sign is interpreted as /u/. The sign U likely stands for a round vowel and has been traditionally read as /o/ by scholars. The Ú sign is also used to indicate the semivowel /w/ (e.g. *še-e-ni-íw-wu-ú-e* = *šēn*(*a*)-*iffu-we* "of my brother").

The script of the Mittani Letter minimalized the possible ambiguities in CV signs, which can often by polysemic (e.g. BI as *bi* and *bé*, LI as *li* and *le*, etc.). In the Mittani Letter certain CV signs were assigned specific vowels as shown in Table 11.1:

Table 11.1 Use of CV signs in Mittani Letter.

	a	*e*	*i*	*u*	*o*
labial	PA	BE	BI	PU	PU
dental	TA	TE	TI	DU	DU
dorsal	KA	GI	KI	GU	KU

As the chart shows, the sign KI always has the vocalic value /i/ and never /e/ in this text, but its consonant can be read as /k/ or /g/ depending upon its position in the word (KI = /ki/ or /gi/). The signs PU and DU do not distinguish between /u/ and /o/, and the quality of the vowel for these signs can only be determined through plene spellings: PU-Ú = /pu/, PU-U = /po/.

Consonants

As mentioned above, the cuneiform script used to render Hurrian is restricted to distinguishing between voiced and voiceless obstruents. Therefore the apparent distinction between such consonants in the language may not accurately reflect Hurrian phonology and as such the labels "voiced" and "voiceless" should be understood as mere convention. It is clear from the spelling of Hurrian words and personal names by non-Hurrian speakers using the alphabetic cuneiform script from Ugarit, that Hurrian distributes "voiced" and "voiceless" consonants according to a positional pattern (allophony). This matches spelling conventions found in the Mittani Letter. The pattern is as follows:

1. "voiceless" in:
   a. word initial (*Anlaut*)
   b. consonantal clusters (unless the combination is obstruent + *l, m, n,* or *r*)
   c. word internal when written geminate (e.g. *itt-* "to go" vs. *id-* "to hit")
2. "voiced" in:
   a. word final position (*Auslaut*)
   b. obstruents in consonantal clusters with sonorants *l, m, n,* or *r* (i.e. *-l-*T- = *-ld-*, *-n-* P- = *-nb-*)
   c. word internal when written singly

Since we cannot know the exact distribution of consonants, be they voiced-voiceless, short-long, etc., we cannot provide an accurate inventory of consonantal phonemes. It must also be understood that the appearance of binary pairs (as "voiced"–"voiceless") may not be accurate, and there may be many more such as in Northwest Caucasian languages. A minimal inventory of consonants, assuming a "voiced"–"voiceless" distinction is as in Table 11.2:

Table 11.2 Hurrian consonants.

	stop		*fricative*		*affricate*			
	voiceless	*voiced*	*voice-less*	*voiced*	*voice-less*	*voiced*	*nasal*	*liquid/sonant*
labial	*pp p*	*b*	*ff f*	*v*			*mm m*	*w*
dental	*tt t*	*d*	*šš š*	*ž*	*cc c*		*nn n*	*ll/l rr/r y*
dorsal	*kk k*	*g*	*ḫḫ ḫ*	*ġ*				

Sound Changes and Orthography

As a suffixing agglutinative language, Hurrian word forms are created through combinations of morphemes. The phonetic combinations created through affixation are governed by rules which can be determined by examining orthography. These can be broken down into broader categories of elision between certain elements or certain resultant consonant

clusters, consonant assimilation with preceding consonant, epenthesis (anaptyxis), and metathesis. A full list can be found in Giorgieri (2000, 188–192).

Word Class

Hurrian has a small number of world classes: nouns (root+nominal morphemes), verbs (root+verbal morphemes), pronouns (isotonic and enclitic), numbers, adverbs, particles, and a very limited set of adjectives. Roots can be ambivalent as to word class, with their function within a clause being determined by the set of suffixed morphemes affixed to it, marking it as noun, adjective, or verb. For example, the root *pašš-* can be modified as following: *paš̌š̌-* "to send", *paššiḫe* "letter", and *paššitḫe* "messenger" (Richter 2012, 303–304). Most adjectives are created through the use of adjectival morphemes (e.g. *ḫurr-ō-ḫe* "Hurrian," *šiniber-o-ḫḫe* "ivory," etc.), however, there appear to be a small set of free standing adjectives that are not created through such morphemes. These are either true adjectives or they need to be analyzed as nominals in apposition to other nouns.

The basic word form consists of a root and some marker of word class. For nouns it requires an additional nominal morpheme, typically *–i*, but also *–a* or *–e*. Adverbs appear to be marked by a morpheme *–o/u*. Minimal marking on verbs is for person (agent) and/or valence ((in)transitive, stative, antipassive). Roots can be modified by suffixes. These affixes can be divided into two groups: derivational morphemes which affect the semantics of the root and those with morphosyntactic properties (e.g. marking number, case, tense, etc.). Derivational morphemes will always be found closer to the root while morphosyntactic morphemes occur further to the right in the morpheme chain.

Nouns and Adjectives

Hurrian nouns can contain morphemes marking: possession, number, case, and for genitives *Suffixaufnahme* or case doubling. According to the suffixing nature of Hurrian, every noun begins with a root followed by various morphemes. Derivational morphemes, when present, immediately follow the root, and modify the semantics of the root. Case markers indicate the end of the noun, although they can be followed by enclitics. In the following paragraphs I will briefly describe the various elements of the Hurrian noun in the order in which they appear in the morpheme chain. The order of morphemes for nouns is as follows:

ROOT + CLASS MARKER + DERIVATIONAL +
"RELATOR" / POSSESSIVE + PLURAL + CASE

As mentioned above, Hurrian nouns can be marked by a word class marker, typically *–i*, but sometimes *–a* or *–e* immediately following the root. The function of these different markers is uncertain. Nouns ending in *–a* often mark familial relations, but can also be used for words such as *tiža* "heart." It is convention when transcribing nouns to combine these word class markers with the root (*e.g. šena* "brother" < *šen-a*; *fori* "eye" < *for-i*). The word class marker is often elided when the root is followed by a derivational morpheme.

When present, derivational morphemes follow the root. There are a large number of these morphemes, and they can be combined to further modify the meaning of the initial root and its function within the sentence. Many of these morphemes create variant nominal forms, while others are used to create adjectives. The nominal class marker when *–i* or *–e* elides before a derivational morpheme, but the *–a* marker may remain. The function of many of these derivational morphemes is unclear and require further research (see Giorgieri 2010).

Following the root plus any derivational morphemes is either the so-called "relator" *–ne* (singular) or *–na* (plural) or a possessive morpheme. The singular relator *–ne* is only found with cases other than the –Ø absolutive, and it can be omitted, although the rules motivating its use or non-use are unclear. The relators have been called an article by some, but they do not appear to indicate definiteness. The relator is especially important for *Suffixaufnahme*, where it stands for the head noun on the genitive modifier (see below). In certain situations, the third plural enclitic pronoun *=lla* can be used in lieu of the plural relator *–na*.

Possession in Hurrian is typically marked on the noun through an affix, even if an explicit possessor is given in the genitive case. This results in the double marking of possession: once through a freestanding genitive and then again on the head noun. Possessive morphemes exist for all three persons: first, second, and third. Plurality for the first and third person is marked by the affix *–až*, while the second plural *–ašše* is difficult to parse. See Table 11.3:

Table 11.3 Possessive morphemes.

	1	2	3
sg.	*–iffe* *–iffu*	*–b/v*	*–i*
pl.	*–iff(e)-až*	*–aššoˀ*	*–i-až*

The first person possessive is *–iffe* in the absolutive, but *–iffu* when followed by a case, and the final *–e* elides before the plural *–až*. The second person is *–v* when following a /u/, but *–b* when preceded by other vowels or in Auslaut, and *–p* when followed by a consonant. The third singular possessive *–i* can be difficult to differentiate from the noun class marker *–i*. In some texts, the scribes distinguish between them through the use of plene writing to mark possession. There is a built in ambiguity regarding nouns with possessives followed by the plural marker *–až*. This plural marker can mark plurality of either the possessive morpheme, or morpheme and root. Therefore, a form such as *en(i)-iff(e)-až* is either "our god" or "our gods."

Following either the plural relator *–na* or possessive morphemes (as needed) is a plural marker *–až*. When following the plural relator, it is likely that the /a/ of the relator elides before the plural morpheme (**-na-až-* > *-n(a)-až-*). This morpheme can be used with all cases except for the -Ø absolutive, unless it is preceded by a possessive morpheme. A non-possessed absolutive is marked only by the plural relator. For the ergative, comitative, and some other cases, the plural marker is separated from the case by an epenthetic vowel (e.g. ergative plural *–n(a)-až-u-ž*). However plural genitives and datives show elision of the initial consonant (*v/w* for both) after the plural.

Hurrian has a rich system of perhaps fourteen cases, although a few, such as the ablative *–dan* and associative *–nna* may be combinations of cases. There are two cases that mark exclusively for core constituents: the –Ø absolutive marks subjects of intransitive verbs and patients of transitive ones, and the *–ž* ergative marks agents of transitive verbs. The remainder of the cases function as obliques, indicating direction, manner, similarity, and so forth. Of the oblique cases, three, the essive, dative, and directive, can also be used to mark certain core elements of a sentence. The dative and directive can be used to mark the beneficiary/recipient of an action. The essive can be used to mark demoted logical patients. This occurs in the antipassive voice which raises agents to the absolutive case subject role by making a transitive verb monovalent (see below), and with dative shift, whereby the recipient or beneficiary of an action is raised to the patient position, requiring demotion of the logical patient to the essive case (Campbell 2011). All modifiers match the case of the noun that they modify.

Of some interest is the genitive case *–ve/–we*. The genitive is tightly bound to its head noun through the process of case doubling or *Suffixaufnahme*. Following the genitive case marker is typically a string of morphemes that reflect the case and number of the head noun. The root, along with any derivational morphemes, of the head noun is represented in this string by the relator, *–ne* for singular and *–na* for plural. For example, when the head noun is in the dative *–va*, the genitive will duplicate this case: *ašti-va šēn(a)-iffu-we-**ne-va*** "for the wife of my brother." When the head noun is in the –Ø absolutive case, the genitive will be followed by –Ø as well: *ašti-*Ø *šēn(a)-iffu-we-*Ø "the wife of my brother" (the –Ø is typically omitted from morphological parsings).

Hurrian has both free standing and enclitic pronouns. Enclitic pronouns are known for all three persons and both numbers. These enclitics can occur after any word form, including sentence introducing particles, and before connective morphemes. Enclitic pronouns are only in the absolutive case. Unlike enclitics, free standing pronouns can be marked for any case, including the ergative, for all three persons. The paradigm for free standing pronouns is incomplete due to their limited use in the preserved Hurrian texts. Known are first, second, and third person pronouns in both the singular and plural. For the first person we likely have a suppletive paradigm, with the absolutive singular as *ište* and all other singular forms constructed off of a root *šo-*, and the absolutive plural in *šatti(=lla)*. Hurrian also has other pronouns such as *ave-* "who, what; someone, something," *šue-* "all," *oli-* "(some/any) other," and *akki- … agi- …* "one … the other."

Hurrian uses post-positional constructions for further specification of oblique cases. These involve the combination of a head noun and one of a set series of post-positions, each of which also refers to parts of the body. The typical post-positional phrase places the head noun in the dative and the post-position in the directive with a possessive affix (e.g. *atta-ī-va ed(i)-ī-da* "for his father"). Alternatively, they can be constructed with a head noun in the genitive with *e*-case *Suffixaufnahme* and the post-position in the *e*-case (e.g. *šēn(a)-iffu-we-n(e)-ē ā(i)-i-ē* "in front of my brother").

Verbs

The Hurrian verb is built off of a root that can be modified by derivational morphemes that function as semantic modifiers. Verbal morphology beyond the root is typically

dependent upon valence and voice. Intransitive and antipassive verbs have only one constituent, an aboslutive subject and promoted agent respectively, and as such use similar morphemes to mark valence and negativity, and optionally mark the subject/promoted agent through enclitic pronouns (Wilhelm 1992b). Transitive verbs are formed differently, with an optional (depending upon person) valence morpheme, negative morphemes, and agent marking. There is a further distinction between transitive verbs in Old Hurrian verbal forms, which appear to mark aspect, and younger "Mittani" Hurrian which mark tense. Furthermore, Hurrian has several distinct modal categories that are marked differently from indicative verbs. The indicative verbal chains can be displayed as follows:

Intransitive/antipassive:	ROOT + DERIVATIONAL + VALENCE + NEGATIVE (+ ENCLITIC PRONOUN)
Old Hurrian transtive:	ROOT + DERIVATIONAL + 3RD PLURAL AGENT + VALENCE + PERSON
"Mittani" Transitive:	ROOT + DERIVATIONAL + TENSE + VALENCE + NEGATIVE + AGENT +PLURAL

The verbal chain begins with a root and possible derivational morphemes, some of which are shared with nouns. The root is typically monosyllabic, although reduplication is possible. Many verbal roots appear to be bivalent, having both intransitive and transitive uses. This is especially prevalent among the verbs of motion (e.g. *un-* "to come (intran.), to bring (tran.)"). Therefore the meaning of the root is dependent upon the syntactic morphemes that follow it.

Voice in Hurrian is different from the better known Semitic and Indo-European languages of the Ancient Near East. Hurrian has two voices, an active and an antipassive, and it also appears to have strategies for stressing the agent or the patient. In the indicative, the active voice functions according to the ergative system (see above). Antipassivity is a voice mechanism by which a transitive verb becomes monovalent. Unlike passives, the antipassive creates a monovalent verb by promoting the agent to the absolutive subject position and either omitting or demoting the patient. The verb maintains its basic transitive semantics, but increased focus is placed on the agent. The patient, when present, is demoted to the essive case. There are two main uses for the antipassive. The first is to focus on the agent at the expense of the patient (e.g. *el(i)-a faġrož(e)-a tān-d-i-b* … ^{d}*Āllāni*, "*Āllāni* cooked the bounteous feast;" emphasis is on the divine name and not on the feast). A second use is syntactic. In relative clauses initiated by the morpheme *iya-*, only absolutives can be relativized. It is not possible in Hurrian to say "The king will reward the man who built the palace," without the "built" of the relative clause being in the antipassive. Note the following example: *e=me=ni(n) tašp-i ʿālli* ^{d}*Lubadaga-ž tašp-o-en*, "The one who destroys (the temple), may Lubadaga destroy that one!"

Hurrian may also have means for stressing the agent or patient in the verbal chain. There appears to be a distinction made in Hurrian between a morpheme *–i-*, which marks agency, and *–o-* which marks patient status. It is possible that these morphemes can combine with a consonant, such as with *–ol-* and *–il-*. A patient focusing morpheme *–o-* or perhaps *–owa* or *–uwa* (with *–a* as the third singular agent marker) appears in clauses with dative shift. The *–o* morpheme would place emphasis or focus on the newly raised beneficiary/recipient. These two morphemes are also found in the modal system where they appear to place focus on either the agent or patient. These morphemes do not change the voice of the verb. A transitive verb in *–o/uwa* will continue to have its agent in the ergative

and patient (logical or not) in the absolutive. But they do represent alternative mechanisms for focusing on agent or patient roles.

Valence in Hurrian is marked by a vocalic morpheme. Hurrian has three different monovalent markers: *–a*, *–e*, and *–u*. The use of a particular morpheme is dependent upon the level of agency of the subject over the action. Intransitives, for which the subject has high agency, are marked by *–a*. These are often, but not exclusively, verbs of motion. Stative or stative-like verbs are marked by *–e*. These include the copula *mann-* "to be" and *tupp-* "to be present or gathered." The morpheme *–u*, for which more work is still needed, appears to be used when the absolutive subject undergoes the action or is non-volitional. This can be seen in the following examples: *fabāni ḫāž-i-mai fār-u ištan(i)-ī-da* "upon hearing, the mountain became sick within himself;" and *ai ḫenni* ^{d}*Teššob ḫenz-ad-u* "if now Teššob is indebted."

Transitivity is marked by an *–o* in Older Hurrian and an *–i* in younger "Mittani" Hurrian. The morpheme *–o* is found in the oldest Hurrian documents and while it is clearly used in transitive constructions it may also mark for perfective aspect. Every occurrence of a verb in *–o* can be translated as a completed action. The morpheme *–i* for transitivity is found in younger texts, and in texts that also use *–o* for perfective transitives, *-i* can be used with imperfective verbs. This transitive *–i* is only found with second and third person agents. With first person agents, the valence is marked by –Ø. The use of *–i* to mark transitivity appears to be late, as there are a number of examples of transitives that do not use this morpheme (e.g. *tad-o-šše* "that which you love" for expected **tad-i-o-šše*). See Table 11.4.

The Hurrian of the Mittani Letter clearly distinguishes three tenses: a future in *–ed-*, a preterit in *–ož-* and a present in –Ø-. The transitive valence morpheme *–i-* is never found with the future and preterit morphemes (i.e. ***-ed-i-a* "he will x (s.t.)"). For this reason the third person singular transitive in the future and preterit is identical to the future and preterit of intransitive verbs. Both are *–ed-a* in the future and *–ož-a* in the preterit. Old Hurrian may have had an aspectual system. As mentioned, transitives in *–o* appear to be perfective. Imperfectives may have been unmarked or in *–i*.

Hurrian utilized different negative markers depending upon the valency of the verb. Monovalent verbs, both intransitives and antipassives, are negated by a morpheme *–kk*V, which immediately follows the valence marker. The negative intransitive appears as *–o-kko* and the antipassive is *–i-kki*. When followed by an enclitic pronoun, the long forms of which all end in *–a*, we find the shift **–kko*=ENCLITIC > *–kka*=ENCLITIC. In the Hurro-Hittite bilingual, the existential verb *mann-* "to be" is negated by a morpheme *–ubur*.

In "Mittani" Hurrian, we find two distinct negative morphemes with transitive verbs. Third person transitives are negated by the morpheme *–ma* which follows the agent agreement

Table 11.4 Valence-marking morphemes.

Monovalent	*–a*	Intransitive
	–i	Antipassive
	–e	"stative"
	–u/–o	Undergoer; change of state
Multivalent	*–o*	Old Hurrian (perfective)
	–Ø	"Mittani" with 1SG/PL AGENT
	–i	"Mittani" with 2SG, 3SG/PL AGENTS

marker. All other persons are negated by -(*u*)*wa*-. This morpheme occurs between the valence marker –Ø or –*i*- and the agent agreement marker. With first person agents, this negative morpheme combines with the long form of the agreement marker (–*affu*) resulting in the combination –*uffu* (i.e. **–uwa=affu* > –*uffu*). The negative of the second person plural verbs is –*uššo* presumably from a combination of **–uwa-*(*a*)*šso* with –*ašso* being the expected long form of the second person plural agreement marker. This negative morpheme –*wa*- is also found with some non-indicative forms.

There are no explicit person agreement morphemes found with monovalent verbs. Subject marking can only be accomplished through the optional use of enclitic pronouns. In Old Hurrian, intransitives and antipassives can be followed by a morpheme –*b*. This has long been interpreted as a third person marker (see for example Wegner 2007, 127), but given its presence with first and second person subjects, this interpretation is no longer tenable (Campbell 2008, 76–80). The function of this –*b* remains uncertain. In "Mittani" Hurrian, transitive verbs agree with the agent. Object agreement, if present, is through the use of an optional enclitic pronoun placed after the agent agreement marker. Plural agents are indicated by the singular agreement marker followed by the plural –*ž*. With the second person plural we appear to have metathesis of expected **–o-ž* > –*š/žo*. Due to issues of preservation, our knowledge of the Old Hurrian transitive paradigm is almost entirely limited to forms with third person agent and third person patients. When the agent is singular, agreement appears to be with the patient through the morpheme –*m* (according to Wilhelm 1992, agreement is with both agent and patient). There are no clear examples of a form with singular agent and plural patient. Agreement with plural agents is indicated by the morpheme –*id*- which occurs before the transitive valence marker –*o*.

Hurrian has a rich complement of non-indicative verbal forms (Campbell 2015). There are upwards of seven modal morphemes that can be used. Non-indicative forms differ from indicatives in a couple of ways. With the exception of the third plural agent –*id*-, agreement is not indicated on non-indicative verbs. With the exception of the imperative, the non-indicative forms do not mark for transitivity. The imperative morpheme is either –*a* (intransitive) or –*i* (transitive). All non-indicative verbs with the exception of the imperative appear to function according to voice. The morpheme –*i*- is an active voice morpheme (occasionally called "transitive" in the literature). The passive, or better, patient-focusing form, is marked by –*o*-. This –*o*- morpheme is used when the subject is the undergoer and not the agent. Therefore, it is also used with "existential" verbs such as *ur*- "to exist" (e.g. *ur-o-v*(*a*)*-en* "may it not exist!"). This voice marker is typically found immediately before the modal morpheme. Voice and mood morphemes can be separated by negatives and by the modal extender –*l*-, the function of which is as of yet undetermined.

Relative Clauses

There are two distinct strategies for marking relative clauses in Hurrian, and a third which combines them. Relative clauses can be introduced by a morpheme *iya*- or *iye*- (*e*- in the Tiš-atal inscription). The introductory chain that begins with *iya/e*- is almost always

completed by a morpheme *–nīn* of uncertain function. The second way of creating relatives is by nominalizing the verb with the morpheme *–šše*. This morpheme is affixed to a fully declined verbal form and, as a noun, is in the same case as its head noun, basically functioning as *Suffixaufnahme*. The head noun can only function as a subject or patient of the relative clause. Note the following examples: *iyā-l-an tān-av ól(i)-la(<na) avēššī=lla=man* "The other (things) which I made, where are they?" and *tuppi niĵār(i)-re(<ne)-ve ar-ož-av-šše-ne-ve* "The tablet of the gift which I have given (lit.: the tablet of the I-have-given gift)."

The head of the relative cannot be the agent of the relative clause unless that agent has been promoted to the absolutive case through the antipassive voice (see above). The head noun of relative clauses in *iya/e-* is always in the absolutive case in the main clause, meaning that it can only be in the subject (e.g. "the gift, which I have given, has gone") or patient (e.g. "you have seen the gift, which I have given"). Presumably, it could also function as the agent in the main clause if the verb is in the antipassive, though I am unaware of examples of this. For nominalized verbs in *–šše*, the head noun of the relative must be the relative verb's absolutive case core constituent, either subject, patient, or agent of an antipassive. However, the head noun can have any role within the main clause, including agent of a transitive verb. Note the following example: [*anā]ĵidē-ne-ž tād-ō-šše-ne-ž kēl-o/u* [me]at offering+SG RELATOR+ERGATIVE love+2SG AGENT+NOMINALIZER+SG RELATOR+ERGATIVE make well+MODAL "May the [me]at offering, which you love, make (you) well!" Note that the head noun, [*anā]ĵidē-ne-ž* is the patient of the nominalized relative *tād-ō-šše-ne-ž*, but agent of the main clause verb *kēl-o/u*. With the modal verb in *–o/u*, a translation "May (you) be made well by the [me]at offering, which you love" is also possible, but note that this translation is passive, while the Hurrian is transitive (agent in ergative, patient understood), with *–o/u* placing emphasis on the patient.

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CHAPTER TWELVE

Hittite

Ilya Yakubovich

Introduction and Sociolinguistic Information

Hittite was once spoken in the territory of present-day Turkey.[1] The first large instalment of Hittite cuneiform tablets was found in the course of German and Ottoman Turkish excavations of Hattuša in 1906–1912. The proximity of the Hittite cuneiform to its Mesopotamian prototype was immediately apparent, but the language structure required decipherment. This task was accomplished at the time of World War One and virtually represented a single-handed effort of the Czech scholar Bedřich Hrozný, whose starting point was the recognition of non-trivial structural and genetic similarities between Hittite and the ancient Indo-European languages. At present, Hittite can be regarded as a well-understood extinct language, to the extent that newly found Hittite cuneiform tablets of all genres normally receive unambiguous interpretation on the basis of the previously accumulated knowledge.

Hittite competes with its close relative Luwian for the palm as the earliest attested Indo-European language, since both Hittite and Luwian forms appear as loanwords and proper nouns in Old Assyrian texts of the twentieth to eighteenth centuries BCE (Dercksen 2007). But by far the greatest majority of Hittite texts available to scholars today emanate from the Late Bronze Age Kingdom of Hattuša (Akkadographic $^{KUR\ URU}$*ḪATTI*), whose more common but less accurate English designation is the Hittite Kingdom. They are preserved on clay tablets and deploy the Anatolian adaptation of Mesopotamian cuneiform script. Contrary to the previous consensus, which dated the earliest available specimens of Hittite epigraphy to the sixteenth or even seventeenth centuries BCE, Van den Hout (2009) plausibly argues that all the excavated Hittite tablets were inscribed over some three hundred years between the early fifteenth and the early twelfth centuries BCE. One should not,

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however, exclude the possibility that the original versions of individual Hittite texts were put into writing at an earlier date, even though the respective tablets have not yet been found. As stressed in Archi (2015), an early composition date is particularly likely in the instance of the Anitta text, a short Hittite autobiography of a historical individual who ruled central Anatolia in the 18th century BCE. Certain forms in the Anitta text make it linguistically more archaic than any other Hittite composition, although whether it could actually have been recorded in Hittite at the time of Anitta remains a debatable issue.

The Hittite terms for speaking or writing in Hittite are *nešili*, *našili*, or *nešumnili*. These adverbs indicate that the Hittite speakers viewed their language as emanating from the region of Neša in central Anatolia. This inference is confirmed by the occurrence of numerous Hittite personal names in Old Assyrian texts from Kaneš, which is the Akkadian name of Hittite Neša, modern Kültepe. Another adverb, *ḫattili*, is used in Hittite texts in order to refer to the non-Indo-European language that was originally spoken in the area of Hattuša, modern Boğazkale, in north-central Anatolia. The English name for this language is Hattian or Hattic. Yet another Hittite adverb, *luwili*, refers to a close relative of Hittite, which is known in English as Luwian or Luvian and will be treated in Chapter 13. There are reasons to believe that the Luwian language was spoken in the western part of central Anatolia, which included the powerful principality of Purušhanda, in the early second millennium BCE (Yakubovich 2010, 244-248). The Anitta text narrates how Anitta's father Pithana conquered Neša, while Anitta used the principality of Neša as a base in order to destroy Hattuša and receive the submission of the ruler of Purušhanda. Thus, the first large Anatolian state on record must have already been multilingual.

The end of large-scale Assyrian commercial activities in Anatolia in about 1740 BCE led to a temporary interruption of written tradition in this region. After a brief hiatus of less than a century, texts written in the Old Babylonian dialect of Akkadian begin to shed light on the history of Asia Minor in the mid-seventeenth century BCE. Now one encounters a large state centered upon the town of Hattuša, which in the meanwhile had apparently been rebuilt after its complete destruction by Anitta. The personal names of political elites associated with this state have Hattian, Hittite, and Luwian etymologies. The Akkadian text *The Siege of Uršu*, which is datable to the seventeenth century BCE on paleographic grounds and refers to the activities of a Hattuša king, contains passages in Hittite, which are embedded in the royal direct speech (Beckman 1995). Thus, one obtains an impression that the Old Kingdom of Hattuša inherited the multiethnic character of the earlier kingdom created by Anitta, but Hittite was carried over from Neša to Hattuša as the language of the royal court. Furthermore, the Hittite language may have occasionally been used in writing for recording oral texts whose translation into Akkadian was not deemed possible or desirable. It is, for example, possible that the highly emotional political testament of the seventeenth century king Hattušili I was drafted directly in Hittite, even though the available copies of this composition all have a much later date. There are, however, no positive reasons to think that Hittite functioned as a literary language during this period.

We are gaining firmer ground once we turn to the sociolinguistic situation in the fifteenth century BCE, when Hittite texts start being recorded in cuneiform in large quantities in Hattuša. According to the Hittite Laws, which were probably compiled within this period, the Kingdom of Hattuša was divided into three parts, Hattuša proper, Luwiya, and

Pala (Hoffner 1997, 19). The names of the last two regions are cognate with the Hittite adverbs referring to speaking in Luwian (*luwili*) and Palaic (*palaumnili*), and so presumably they refer to the areas where the Luwian and Palaic languages continued to be spoken. Palaic, as well as Luwian, is a close relative of Hittite, belonging to the Anatolian group. Incantations in both Luwian and Palaic constituted an integral part of archaic rituals pertaining to the state cult of Hattuša (Yakubovich 2010, 254-260). On the contrary, the Laws do not make a distinction between the Hittite and Hattian core areas, which may indicate that the two had already blended by the fifteenth century BCE. Nevertheless, several Hittite and Hattian bilingual rituals support the status of Hattian as an important liturgical language during this period (Schuster 1974-2002).

While Luwian, Palaic, and Hattian are all treated as vernaculars on the margins of cuneiform written culture, Hittite gradually assumes a role of the national literary language in Hattuša. There are four converging arguments leading towards such a conclusion. Firstly, foreign literary texts, such as the Akkadian Epic of Atrahasis or the Hurrian Epic of Manumission, were eventually translated into Hittite but apparently not into the other languages of central Anatolia. Secondly, Hittite cuneiform maintained a link with tradition by deploying many Sumero- and Akkadograms, in contrast to the rarity of heterographic spellings in Luwian, Palaic and Hattian texts. There are even instances where the heterograms are erroneously written in Hittite texts just as the scribes heard them (Weeden 2001, 333-336), which suggests that an artificial scribal jargon mixing Hittite and Mesopotamian elements could be deployed in dictating such texts. Thirdly, if several languages alternate on the same tablet, and if their hierarchical relationship is clear, then Hittite always functions as the matrix language, while the Luwian, Palaic and Hattic passages are embedded. Fourthly, Hittite became the metalanguage in managing the Hattuša library, being used, for example, for compiling shelf-lists.

The increasing sophistication of Hattuša bureaucracy brought about the genre of Hittite written instructions for administrative officials, which sometimes contain interesting information about daily life in the capital. The two of them that are conducive to sociolinguistic observations are the Protocol for the Palace Gate-keeper (Miller 2013, 88-97) and the Protocol for the Royal Body Guard (Miller 2013, 98-121). Neither of them can be securely dated using internal references, but the early fourteenth century constitutes a likely linguistic and paleographic dating. Both texts contain examples of short official communications to be delivered specifically in Hittite. The Protocol for the Royal Body Guard suggests, however, that an order could be transmitted down the chain of command in Luwian, while the Protocol for the Palace Gate-keeper features an admonishment that is recorded in Hittite but is to be pronounced in Luwian. This combination suggests that both languages were used in oral communication in the capital, but that Hittite had higher social prestige. Hattian passages, on the other hand, are rendered in Hattian but accompanied by a Hittite translation. This presumably implies that the Hattian language was no longer widely understood in Hattuša and that its use in the palace protocol reflected homage to tradition. Palaic is not mentioned in the instructions, and apparently played little if any role in Hattuša at this or any later point.

The earliest Hittite tablet collections discovered in the near periphery of Hattuša (Tapikka / Maşat-Höyük, Šapinuwa / Ortaköy) date back to the fourteenth century BCE. In the middle of the fourteenth century BCE the foreign invasions apparently reached

Hattuša itself, but its second half witnessed a rapid expansion of the Empire of Hattuša to the west and southeast, albeit with different sociolinguistic effects. The rulers of Hattuša never attempted to enforce Hittite as the main written language in Northern Syria. Its use there remained restricted to superstructures imposed upon the local communities, which continued to deploy Akkadian, Hurrian, or Ugaritic for their epigraphic needs. Akkadian, the language of international diplomacy in Late Bronze Age Near East, was even used alongside Hittite in Syrian vassal treaties. A different situation may be observed in western Anatolia, where Hittite was the only language used in written communication with the local vassals (Beckman 1996, 7-8). As a matter of fact, Hittite even reached the west of Asia Minor before the latter's political subjugation by Hattuša. Tarhundaradu, ruler of the independent Arzawa, used the services of a Hittite scribe for his diplomatic correspondence with Egypt in mid-fourteenth century BCE (Hawkins 2009). Hittite was the first and the last language to have been used for purposes of writing cuneiform in the Aegean, even though it was never widely spoken in this region. It is remarkable that even the Hittite magic rituals attributed to western Anatolian practitioners never contain embedded passages in the local vernaculars, in stark contrast to the situation in central and southeastern Anatolia (Yakubovich 2010, 100-104).

The thirteenth century BCE is the period that yields the bulk of available information about the organization of the Hittite scribal community. Van den Hout (2016) presents a convincing case for the division of scribes in Hattuša into two groups of unequal size. The larger one consisted of ordinary scribes, whose duty was to write texts under dictation or to provide exact copies of the existing tablets. Their social standing appears to have been like that of other specialized craftsmen, such as musicians or cooks. The high degree of orthographic uniformity throughout the Empire suggests that the provincial scribes were trained on a standard curriculum regardless of their native language (cf. Archi 2016, 27). The smaller group consisted of high-ranking scribes, whose duties must have included surveying the content of Hattuša libraries, preparing new recensions of the available texts, and possibly dictating new compositions. It may be more appropriate to label this group as scholars, with the caveat that the bulk of Hittite scholarship was concerned with religious issues, such as collecting magic rituals or reforming the state cult.

The retention of Hittite as the written language of administration and scholarship in Hattuša in the thirteenth century BCE contrasted with the ongoing shift from Hittite to Luwian as the spoken language in the capital over the same period. This can be seen particularly clearly through the systematic practice of embedding Luwian inflected forms in Hittite compositions, including those that demonstrably emanate from Hattuša. The Hattuša scribes were aware of the issue of code-switching and used a special sign, the "gloss wedge", for marking the Luwian forms, which was otherwise deployed for drawing attention to other unusual elements in Hittite texts (Waal 2015, 80-81). Editors, in turn, sometimes attempted to replace the marked forms with their Hittite equivalents, or simply dropped the "gloss wedges" if the respective Luwian forms could be regarded as sufficiently integrated (Yakubovich 2010, 378-386). But even the edited versions of thirteenth century Hittite compositions commonly contain marked forms, which suggests that even the most educated scribes were no longer able or inclined to write in "pure" Hittite. The implied situation of asymmetrical bilingualism correlates with the status of Luwian as the only language of monumental inscriptions in Hattuša and the area under its control

(compare Chapter 14), as well as the predilection for Luwian names among the Hattuša elites in the period under discussion (Weeden 2013).

The language shift in Hattuša and the surrounding area precluded the spread of Hittite literacy beyond the public domain. Throughout the thirteenth century, Hittite scholarship continued to thrive in Hattuša, and Hittite administrative texts kept being produced in both the capital and provincial centers, such as Šamuha / Kayalıpınar and Šarišša / Kuşaklı. But the disintegration of the Empire of Hattuša in the early twelfth century BC precipitated the decline of the Hittite written tradition. The structure of the Hattuša tablet collection suggests that when the royal court abandoned Hattuša at some point in the early twelfth century BCE, they could evacuate most written records accumulated during the final decades (Seeher 2001, 633 with ref.). Presumably, the people who took an interest in them could still read the cuneiform. But the final resting place of the relocated Hittite tablets has never been identified, while the so-called Neo-Hittite states, the cultural heirs of the Empire of Hattuša, relied on the Anatolian hieroglyphic script and used a late form of Luwian in writing (cf. Chapter 13). It is likely that the knowledge of writing and reading Hittite was lost in the course of the systemic collapse that shook Anatolia and much of the rest of the Near East in the twelfth century BCE. It is also possible that the same period witnessed the completion of the language shift from Hittite to Luwian, although there is no way to exclude the hypothesis that isolated pockets of Hittite speakers lingered in obscurity in central Anatolia for several more centuries.

The three centuries of Hittite's textual transmission witnessed its rapid evolution, which at least in part was induced by external contact. There is a consensus that the Hittite texts composed in the fifteenth century BCE or earlier display a significant degree of grammatical uniformity, and the term Old Hittite was introduced as their collective designation. Most scholars employ the term Middle Hittite to refer to a large body of texts composed in the first half of the fourteenth century BCE. The Middle Hittite compositions reflect rapid changes in Hittite grammar vis-à-vis the previous state. Melchert (2007) placed them in a relative chronology based upon philological analysis of the relevant corpus. The production of Middle Hittite texts in Hattuša ended with the period of disruption caused by foreign invasion. The term New Hittite refers to the varieties of language associated with texts of the late fourteenth and thirteenth centuries BCE. Here, too, one observes ongoing changes in grammatical structure, but also some transparent contact-induced features, notably the frequent use of embedded Luwian forms marked by the "gloss wedge". The linguistically based taxonomy offered above must be distinguished from the paleographic one, which operates with the notions of Old, Middle, and New Scripts (the boundary between the first two is somewhat indistinct.)

Grammatical Sketch

Classification and Seminal Bibliography

The most detailed synchronic description of the Hittite grammar available to date is (Hoffner and Melchert 2008). There are also shorter up-to-date descriptions in German (Rieken 2005) and Russian (Kassian and Sidel'tsev 2013). The standard concise synchronic dictionary of Hittite is (Tischler 2008), but several much larger dictionaries

are in preparation and available in part. In this survey, I intend to concentrate on those peculiarities of the Hittite language that are significant for its genetic classification, indicative of horizontal contacts, or offer typological interest.

There is a consensus that Hittite belongs to the extinct Anatolian group of languages, whose other members are Luwian, Palaic, Lycian, Lydian, and Carian, as well as several more languages with a very limited corpus. It has been, furthermore, cogently argued that Hittite represents an outlier within this group, which means that the other Anatolian languages developed in common for a while after Hittite split off (Oettinger 1978). The Anatolian group, in turn, is genetically related to the Indo-European language family, where it likewise constitutes an outlier according to the present day's near-consensus. Scholars, however, differ in the practical implications of this configuration for the modeling of Proto-Indo-European reconstruction. On the one hand, there has been made a claim that Hittite and its close Anatolian relatives split from Proto-Indo-European just several generations before its further disintegration (Eichner 2015). Under such an approach, there is little reason to reconstruct two separate stages of Proto-Indo-European. On the other hand, the so-called Indo-Hittite hypothesis implies that Proto-Anatolian and Proto-Indo-European are to be treated as two daughters of a protolanguage (Proto-Indo-Hittite or Proto-Indo-Anatolian), which deserves separate reconstruction (cf. Kloekhorst 2016). Whether Proto-Anatolian split from Proto-Indo-European in Asia Minor or elsewhere is a controversial matter, even though most linguists are leaning toward the latter view.

Phonology

The study of Hittite phonology is complicated by the structure of the syllabic cuneiform script, which has been adapted from a system designed for the transmission of the Semitic Akkadian language. Certain features of the commonly used Hittite transcription, which make it look unusual from the comparative or typological perspective, are rooted in Assyriological conventions. This holds, for example, for the use of *š* as ostensibly the only voiceless sibilant in Hittite, as opposed to the ancient Indo-European languages, where the main sibilant is usually /s/. Such a transcription convention is carried over from Akkadian, where the syllabograms <ša>, <ši>, <šu>, etc, taken over into the Hittite cuneiform, stand for a sibilant that was pronounced as [s] in some dialects of Akkadian and as [ʃ] in others. We have no way of knowing the exact pronunciation of this sound in the peripheral Old Babylonian community that lent its script to the Hittites. But the transliteration of Hittite proper nouns in Egyptian, which has the contrasting phonemes /s/ and /š/, suggests that the Hittite sibilant was /s/ rather than /ʃ/ (Kimball 1999, 106). Therefore, the transcriptions Hattuša, Neša etc., adopted here and in much of Hittitological literature, represent above all homage to tradition, as opposed to the more straightforward but less conventional renderings Hattusa, Nesa etc.

The question whether the principal opposition involving the Hittite stops is tense vs. lax or voiceless vs. voiced is controversial and will be addressed in the discussion of the Anatolian Linguistic Area. Here it can only be noted that the consistent choice in favor of the first solution is conducive to extending the same opposition to the fricative /s/, nasals, and liquids. Then one obtains several additional phonemes, e.g. tense /ll/

contrasting with lax /l/. Under the more traditional interpretation, /ll/ is a geminate, i.e. a combination of two identical phonemes. With these caveats in mind, the Hittite phonological system can be reconstructed as in Table 12.1:

Table 12.1 The Phonological System of Hittite (tentative reconstruction).

Stops:	/p(p)/	/t(t)/	/k(k)/	/k(k)^{w}/
	/b/	/d/	/g/	/g^{w}/
Affricate:		/ts/		
Fricatives:		/s/	/x/	/x^{w}/
			/ɣ/	/ɣ^{w}/
Nasals:	/m/	/n/		
Liquids:		/r/, /l/		
Glides:	/w/	/j/		
Vowels:	/i/, /i:/			/u/, /u:/
		/e/, /e:/	/o/, /o:/	
			/a/, /a:/	

A peculiarity that sets Hittite phonologically apart from the non-Anatolian Indo-European languages is the presence of so-called "laryngeals", namely , /x/, /ɣ/, /x^{w}/, and /ɣ^{w}/. They are rendered in Hittite by the same signs < ḫa>, < ḫi>, < ḫu>, etc. as those used for combinations involving the Akkadian fricative /ḫ/. The system of the four contrasting "laryngeals" proposed above is based on Kloekhorst (2008, 27), while certain other reconstructions assume fewer elements belonging to this class. The precise phonetic realization of Hittite laryngeals is subject to much debate, but the renderings of the phoneme /x/ in Egyptian and Ugaritic converge with the interpretation of its counterparts in the first millennium Anatolian languages leading to the conclusion that its most likely articulation in Hittite was as a velar or uvular fricative (cf. Weiss 2016). This appears to agree with the assumed value of /ḫ/ in Akkadian (cf. Chapter 7).

The ancient Indo-European languages outside Anatolian are commonly assumed to have lost their "laryngeals" with secondary phonological effects, such as compensatory lengthening and change in vowel quality. For example, **peh$_2$s-* "to pasture, protect" is thought to have yielded Hittite *paḫš-* and **pās-* in many Indo-European groups outside Anatolia, as in Latin *pās-tor* "shepherd" (Kimball 1999, 402). Nevertheless, the hypothesis that the loss of "laryngeals" represents a classifying innovation of non-Anatolian Indo-European, although vehemently defended in (Lehrman 1998), is now a minority view. Most Indo-Europeanists are convinced that the "laryngeals" /h$_1$/, /h$_2$/, and /h$_3$/ are independently required in order to explain non-trivial correspondences between non-Anatolian Indo-European languages, e.g. Sanskrit *guru-* ~ Greek *βαρύς* ~ Latin *grāvis* "heavy", which are commonly reconstructed as PIE **g^{w}r̥h$_2$u-* "heavy". The set of such beliefs, which had begun to develop long before the decipherment of Hittite, is known as the Laryngeal Theory.

At the same time, the frequently advanced claim that Hittite data provided a definite confirmation to the validity of the Laryngeal Theory is inaccurate, because the number

and distribution of "laryngeals" in Hittite is different from what is typically reconstructed for Proto-Indo-European. In fact, the precise pattern of correspondence between the reconstructed Indo-European and Anatolian "laryngeals" represents one of the most controversial aspects of Anatolian historical phonology. In order to appreciate the extent of existing differences in opinion, it should suffice to compare the accounts of Melchert (1994, 64-74, 122), on the one hand, and Kloekhorst (2006, 77-95), on the other hand.

Morphology

Hittite is an inflectional language, but the morphological structure of its inflection is relatively simple, particularly so in the verbal system, where all the forms are derived from a single stem in most cases. The most salient exception here consists of the verbs that attach their endings directly to the root. Here one frequently observes the alternation of the root vowel depending on person and number, e.g. *ēš-zi* "he is" vs. *aš-anzi* "they are" or *šakk-i* "he knows" vs. *šekk-anzi* "they know".

The Hittite finite verbal forms are inflected for person (first, second, third) and number (singular and plural). The Hittite tense-mood system consists of present, preterit, and imperative, each characterized by its own set of inflectional endings. The aspectual distinctions are expressed by means of derivational morphology. The perfective aspect is formally unmarked, while the imperfective forms are derived by means of lexically distributed suffixes, most commonly *-šḳe-* but also *-šša-* and *-anna-*. The imperfective forms convey a variety of meanings, such as progressive, habitual and inceptive (Hoffner and Melchert 2002). To this one must add the inherited contrast between the active and medio-passive endings, even though many verbs are compatible with only one set, or do not display a synchronic semantic opposition between the two sets.

The most characteristic formal peculiarity of the Hittite verbal system is the contrast between the inflectional endings of the so-called *mi-* and *ḫi*-conjugations. Although historically the *mi-* and *ḫi*-verbs must have had some difference in meaning, this is no longer a synchronic state of affairs. Instead of this, one can trace the correlation between the uses of the two conjugations and stem formation types. Thus, the derivatives in *-iye/a-*, causatives / factitives in *-nu-*, and imperfectives in *-šḳe-* normally take the *mi*-conjugation, while the verbs in *-ai/-iya-*, imperfectives in *-šša-* and *-anna-*, and factitives in *-aḫḫ-* normally take the *ḫi*-conjugation. The athematic verbs display different vowel alternation patterns depending in part on their conjugations (cf. above). The synchronic classes of Hittite verbal stem-formation, together with their inflectional properties, are thoroughly described in Oettinger (2002). The difference between the two sets of endings in the active voice in the earliest attested Hittite texts is illustrated in the Table 12.2 below. The late Hittite texts display numerous cases of the original *ḫi*-verbs used with *mi*-endings.

The Hittite non-finite verbal forms include participles in *-ant-*, infinitives in *-wanzi*, *-manzi*, *-anna*, supine in *-wan,* and gerunds (verbal nouns) in *-war*, *-mar*, *-ātar*. The participles indicate an attained state and can be both agent and patient-oriented (e.g. *šekkant-* "knowing" and "known"), although the second meaning is more common. The participial derivatives *arandaš* "standing" and *ašandaš* "sitting" function as converbs. The infinitives are deployed in a variety of syntactic constructions, whereas the use of the supine is restricted to the combinations with the verbs *dāi-* "to put" and *tiya-* "to step" meaning "to begin / be willing to do something". The genitive form of the gerund is

Table 12.2 Indicative Endings of Old Hittite Active Verbs.

	Present		*Preterit*	
	mi-conjugation	*ḫi-conjugation*	*mi-conjugation*	*ḫi-conjugation*
1sg.	-mi	-ḫi, -ḫe	-(n)un	-ḫun
2sg.	-ši	-ti	-š, -t	-t(a)
3sg.	-zi	-i, -e	-t	-š, -ta
1pl.	-weni, -meni, -mani		-wen, -men	
2pl.	-teni	-teni, -šteni	-ten	-ten, -šten
3pl.	-anzi		-er	

frequently deployed without a head noun with the modal (quasi-gerundive) meaning, e.g. *ḫarkannaš*, lit. "of perishing" i.e. "deserving the death penalty".

The Hittite nouns are inflected for number and case, while the adjectives are in addition inflected for gender. There are two numbers, singular and plural, and six to eight cases, depending on the historical period. Hittite has two genders, common and neuter, with no contrast between the masculine and feminine gender. The gender and number oppositions are neutralized in several cases, as shown in the table below.

Table 12.3 Old Hittite Nominal Declension.

	singular		*plural*	
	common	*neuter*	*common*	*neuter*
nominative	-š, -∅	-∅, -n	-eš	-a, -i, -∅
accusative	-(a)n		-uš	
vocative	-∅, -i	N/A		
allative	-a		N/A	
dative-locative	-i, -ya, -∅		-aš	
genitive	-aš		-an, (-aš)	
ablative	-az, -za			
instrumental	-it, -ta, -da			

There are some differences in the formal structure of declension, which depend on the stem type. The nominal stems are classified according to their final elements, which frequently constitute separate morphemes. A peculiarity of the *a*-stems is the use of the ending *-n* in nom.-acc.sg.n, e.g. *pēda-n*, "place", *yuga-n* "yoke", *kunna-n* "right", whereas the other stems use the zero ending in the same function. The *i-* and *ai*-stem nouns set themselves apart by occasionally using the ending *-ya* in dat.-loc.sg, e.g. *lutti-ya* "to the window", *ḫuwaši-ya* "to the stele", while the endingless dat.-loc.sg is typical of some consonantal stems, e.g. *šiwat* "on the day", *tagān* "to the ground". The nom.-acc.pl.n

endings *-i* and *-∅* are usually appended to the suffixes ending in *-l* and *-r*, e.g. *išḫi-ūl* "treaties", *meḫ-urr-i* "times". But the most common feature complicating the structure of declensional paradigms consists of suffix alternations. For example, the *i-* and *u*-stem adjectives distinguish themselves from the respective nouns by adding a vowel to the suffix in the oblique cases: cf. *šuppi-* "pure", gen.sg *šuppay-aš* vs. *tuppi-* "tablet", gen.sg *tuppiy-aš*. Even less regular are the so-called heteroclitic stems, which combine vowel and consonant (*r/n*) alternations, e.g. nom.sg *wāt-ar*, gen.sg *wit-en-aš* "water"; nom. sg *ḫann-eššar*, gen.sg *ḫann-ešn-aš* "judgement"; nom.sg *miyatar*, gen.sg *miya-nn-aš* < **miya-tn-aš* "growth".

In the discussion of the Hittite pronominal system it is useful to distinguish between stressed personal, clitic personal, and the other pronouns. The stressed personal pronouns are limited to the singular and plural of the first and second person. Their principal peculiarity is the suppletive nominative form and the lack of formal distinction between accusative and dative-locative. As an example, one can cite the declension of the first singular pronoun "I": nom. *ūk*, acc. *ammuk*, dat.-loc. *ammuk*, gen. *ammēl*, abl. *ammēdaz*. The clitic personal pronouns are attested for all the three persons, but their case paradigms are restricted. The first and second person clitic pronouns are limited to the generalized accusative-dative forms *-mu* "me", *-ta* "thee", *-naš* "us", and *-šmaš* "you". The third person clitic pronouns distinguish between the nominative accusative and dative cases, but the use of their nominative forms is limited to intransitive clauses, otherwise they are omitted. The other Hittite pronouns, for example, the demonstratives and interrogatives, display a range of inflected forms that is similar to that of the adjectives, but set themselves apart from those through special pronominal endings. As an example, one can consider the paradigm of *ka-* "this": nom.sg.c *kāš*, acc.sg.c *kūn*, nom.-acc.sg.n *kī*, gen.sg *kēl*, dat.-loc.sg *kēdani*, nom.pl.c *kē*, acc.pl.c *kūš*, nom.-acc.pl.n *kē*, gen. pl *kinzan*, dat.-loc.pl *kēdaš*, abl. *kez*, instr. *kēt*.

A morphosyntactic feature of Hittite that claimed much attention in recent decades is split ergativity. Certain types of Hittite subjects cannot appear in transitive constructions. This concerns both clitic subject pronouns (cf. above) and neuter gender nouns, which are replaced with a special ergative form triggering common gender agreement. Thus Hitt. *nepiš-* (n.) "sky" appears in the endingless form *nepiš* as the subject of an intransitive clause and the direct object, as opposed to the ergative form *nepišanza* (c.), which is reserved for the subject of a transitive clause. The history of Hittite bears witness to the ongoing grammaticization of this phenomenon, to the extent that one can operate with the notion of an ergative case in relation to the New Hittite compositions (Goedegebuure 2013).

Syntax

The syntactic structure of Hittite is characterized by consistent left-branching. The category-specific correlates of this general principle include the SOV word-order, the placement of the possessor before the possessum in a possessive construction, and the use of postpositions rather than prepositions. A feature of the Hittite grammar is the category of local adverbs, which can function as preverbs, postpositions, or adverbs proper depending on their syntactic position. Its other salient feature is the presence of numerous clitics that occur after the sentence-initial particle or the first stressed word within a clause

(the so-called Wackernagel position). The placement of clitics within a chain is governed by a strict ranking order and is not dependent on the syntax of the rest of the clause (Luraghi 1990, 14). But the comparison of Hittite with the other languages belonging to the Anatolian group shows that this regular pattern is innovative. Some languages, like Palaic, display more variation in the placement of clitic-like elements, while others, like Luwian, show an equally regular pattern but a different order of clitics within a chain. Within Hittitology, the emphasis is now shifting in the direction of identifying elements whose syntactic behavior places them halfway between the stressed constituents and Wackernagel clitics.

Areal Features

On the assumption that the Anatolian languages are the newcomers, their appearance in Anatolia is variously dated between the late fourth and late third millennia BCE. What is not controversial is the coexistence of the Anatolian group with genetically unrelated languages in Asia Minor in the second millennium BCE. Besides Hattian, already mentioned several times above, another areal neighbor of Hittite was Hurrian, whose native speakers apparently inhabited the southeastern periphery of Anatolia, as well as the adjacent parts of Mesopotamia and Syria (cf. Chapter 12). It is likely that other genetically unrelated languages stayed in contact with Hittite but left no direct testimony in the available records. In addition, Hittite remained in contact with other languages of the Anatolian group, of which Palaic and Luwian are attested in writing in the second millennium BCE.

The concept of an Anatolian linguistic area is discussed in detail in Watkins (2001). Its most salient phonological feature is the assumed loss of opposition between voiceless and voiced stops in word-initial position. The Lycian alphabet, for example, has the graphemes <p> and <b>, but only the former is used word-initially in inherited forms. Since word-initial voicing neutralization is typologically quite uncommon, the inherited Proto-Anatolian opposition of voiced and voiceless stops has been reinterpreted as a contrast of tense-lax type in several languages (Melchert 1994: 13-21). An independent argument for this secondary opposition being reflected in the system of the Hittite cuneiform is the so-called Sturtevant's Rule (Hoffner and Melchert 2008: 35-36). The Hittite orthography, for example, does not display systematic opposition between the sign sequences *-a-pa-* and *-a-ba-* in the inherited lexicon, even though the signs <pa> and <ba> were both available to the Hattuša scribes. Instead it relies on the fundamental contrast between the spellings *-a-pa-* and *-ap-pa-*, which may have reflected intervocalic lax and tense consonants respectively (voicing possibly representing an additional phonetic correlate of the lax consonants).

It is crucial that the version of the Hurrian cuneiform syllabary developed in the Kingdom of Mitanni reformed the orthography of its Mesopotamian prototype in a way that is very similar to the innovations of Hittite cuneiform, which speaks in favor of structural similarity between the Hittite and Hurrian phonological systems. On the other hand, the Urartian language attested in the first millennium BCE represents a close relative of Hurrian, but its cuneiform orthography imitates the Akkadian contrast between voiced, voiceless and emphatic stops, also in initial position. In a similar fashion, stops in the Indo-European languages outside Anatolia commonly preserve the voicing contrast in both

word-initial and word-medial positions. Therefore, it is difficult to point out a precise source for the restructuring that occurred in Anatolian and Hurrian, a problem in line with the usual difficulties in identifying sources of innovations within an established linguistic area.

Melchert (1994) extends word-initial neutralization to Hittite. This hypothesis has been challenged in Kloekhorst (2010), where one finds arguments for the lexical contrast between the word-initial signs <ta> and <da> in Old Hittite / Old Script texts. The latter sign typically occurs in two very common verbs: *dā-* "to take" and *dai-* "to put". Kloekhorst is obviously right in seeing this as a challenge to Melchert's views, but an assumption which is sufficient to accommodate the new data is that the first attempts to put Hittite into writing had already begun before the completion of voicing neutralization. If the areal process of word-initial neutralization was spreading by diffusion in the mid-second millennium BCE, it is very likely that the frequent verbs "to take" and "to put" were among the last forms to succumb to this tendency. This would explain their archaic orthography as opposed to the predominant use of <ta> in most other inherited Old Hittite lexemes listed in (Kloekhorst 2010: 204), which effectively reflects neutralization in progress.

On the morphological level, an important areal feature proposed for the Anatolian linguistic area is the agreement between the possessum and the possessor in the possessive construction (Luraghi 2008). In Hittite, this tendency manifests itself in the phenomenon of case attraction in noun phrases, also known as partitive apposition. For example, the normal way of saying "from my mother's womb" is *annaz kartaz*, literally, "from mother, from heart".

The same tendency triggered the formation of possessive adjectives in Luwian and the rise of typologically rare double-case constructions in Hurrian and Urartian. It is possible that this areal feature originated in the Caucasus, since one also finds double-case constructions in Old Georgian and case attraction of the Hittite type in Classical Armenian. There are also broader similarities shared by the Anatolian linguistic area and Greek, notably the constraint on word-initial *r-* (cf. Chapter 13).

Contacts

Prehistoric areal interaction must be distinguished from specific contacts between Hittite and its neighbors, which partly occurred in the historical period. The Hittite–Hattian symbiosis left profound traces in the structure of the state cult of Hattuša, as visible in Hittite texts (Klinger 1996). For example, the two heads of the Hattuša pantheon, the Storm-god of Hattuša and Sun-goddess of Arinna, apparently do not directly reflect Indo-European heritage, but should rather be regarded as adaptations of the Hattian deities Taru and Wurunšemu. There is also substantial evidence for Hattian loanwords in Hittite, which do not, however, belong to the basic vocabulary, but are concentrated instead in the religious and administrative spheres (Goedegebuure 2008, 146-147). Typical examples are Hitt. *ḫalmaššuit-* "throne" vs. Hatt. *ḫanfašuit* "id." or Hitt. *ḫalputil(i)-* "(wooden structure)" vs. Hatt. *ḫalfutte* "id.". The transfer of such loanwords was probably facilitated by dynastic intermarriages, which led to the formation of bilingual Hittite-Hattian elites in the area of Hattuša in the eighteenth to seventeenth centuries BCE.

Akkadian, and to a lesser extent Sumerian, was used in writing by scholars and scribes in the Kingdom of Hattuša. The Akkadian influence on Hittite was recently discussed in (Schwemer 2006) and (Dardano 2012). The second paper is somewhat more optimistic regarding the scope of the relevant contacts than the first one, but both sets of data are compatible with the conclusion that the primary vehicle of influence was scribal bilingualism. Arguably the most common Akkadian loanword in Hittite texts is *tuppi-* "tablet" (Akkadian *tuppu-* "id."). No less telling are syntactic calques, such as the use of Hittite possessive phrases with the head-noun *išḫa-* "lord", which are clearly modeled on their Akkadian counterparts with the head-noun *bēl(u-)* "id." (e.g. Hitt. *auriḫaš išḫa-* "head of watch post, margrave" vs. Akk. *bēl madgalti* "id."). It is easy to build up a scenario of how such expressions could be calqued within the circles of Hattuša scholars, being originally used as Akkadian technical terms, then as Akkadograms in Hittite texts, and finally as Hittite technical terms. From the typological viewpoint, one can compare this situation with the influence of Medieval Latin on English or German, although the impact of Akkadian upon Hittite happened to be more modest due to the lower rate of cuneiform literacy.

For the status of Hurrian in central Anatolia see Chapter 11 and compare de Martino (2017). The main prerequisite for lexical contact between the two languages was the interest paid by the rulers of Hattuša to the rituals and mythology of southwestern Anatolia and northern Syria. Hurrian texts were first brought in large numbers to central Anatolia in the early fourteenth century BCE in the wake of successful campaigns by Hattuša against the Hurrian Kingdom of Mitanni. Eventually many of these texts were translated or adapted into Hittite, but numerous technical terms of Hurrian origin were retained as landmarks of Hurro-Hittite ritualistic tradition (Haas 1998). Hurrian religious terminology may also occur in modest quantities in original Hittite compositions of the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries BCE. Furthermore, one can show that the intensity of lexical contacts between Hittite and Hurrian was higher than in the instance of Hittite and Akkadian, because several Akkadian or even Sumerian lexemes were borrowed into Hittite via Hurrian, whereas the opposite is not true. As examples of Hurrian mediation in transmitting Mesopotamian lexicon, which is demonstrable through the use of Hurrian suffixes, Hitt. *pūḫugari-* "replacement, substitute" vs. Akk. *pūḫu-* "id." and Hitt. *šankun(n)i-*, *šak(k)unni-* "priest" vs. Sum. *sanga*, Akk. *šangû-* "id." may be mentioned.

The only group of Hittite texts that displays structural interference from Hattic and Hurrian are translations of Hattic and Hurrian compositions (as opposed to creative adaptations). A smoking gun for the likely translated origin of a Hittite text is a large number of deviations from the standard SOV word order (Sideltsev 2002, 187–188). A related feature is clitic doubling, as this device was conscientiously used as a way of compromise between the normal and inverted word order (Rizza 2007). For example, the Hattian sentence "(He) poured out the foundation stones" is translated into Hittite as "(He)=them poured out, the foundation stones". The semantically redundant use of the clitic =them yields the well-formed Hittite clause "He poured them out", and then the noun "foundation stones" is appended to its right periphery. The resulting construction, on the one hand, closely imitates the Hattian VO word order, and, on the other hand, represents an OV clause with object resumption, a construction that was tolerated, although rare, in standard Hittite. In contrast, claims about standard Hittite syntax being restructured

under Hattian influence appear to be unfounded, since the morphosyntactic structures of Old Hittite are typologically consistent and in general compatible with Proto-Indo-European reconstruction. In fact, Goedegebuure (2008) argues that, conversely, it is the Hattian morphosyntax that reflects contact-driven typological disruption.

Contacts with Palaic apparently played little role in the evolution of the Hittite language, perhaps since Palaic was confined to the geographic periphery of the Kingdom of Hattuša and never acquired the status of a literary language. A quite different situation can be observed in the instance of the Luwian influence on Hittite. Already for the prehistoric period one can identify traces of contact between the Luwian and Hittite grammars, which speaks for the adjacent character of the two language communities (cf. Chapter 13). The Luwian grammatical influence becomes more intense in the fourteenth century BCE and assumes a completely pervasive character in the fourteenth century BCE (Rieken 2006). It is to be stressed that the progressive restructuring of Hittite under the impact of Luwian is not limited to specific genres of texts, but must be assumed for the language in general, including its oral manifestation. The same conclusion is probably to be extended to the increasing use of Luwian foreign words (code-switches) in New Hittite, since written communication is cross-linguistically more resistant to the embedded use of the basilect than oral speech is. It is thus fair to say than the contact-induced features of the New Hittite texts give us sufficient clues for reconstructing a situation of asymmetrical bilingualism and the progressive shift from Hittite to Luwian as the spoken language in Hattuša in the thirteenth century BCE (cf. Yakubovich 2010, 307).

NOTES

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Luwian

Craig Melchert

Textual Evidence

Luwian is attested from the sixteenth through the eighth century BCE from central, western, and southern Anatolia and northern Syria, in a cuneiform script borrowed from Mesopotamia and a hieroglyphic script developed within Anatolia in the context of the Hittite Empire, which due to its multi-ethnic and multi-lingual character may be better referred to after its own designation as the Empire of Hattusha (see for the scripts Hawkins 2003 and Payne 2015).

This brief characterization seriously oversimplifies the facts of the attestation of Luwian. I must first emphasize that all of our extant evidence for Luwian in cuneiform comes from the state archives of the Hittite capital Hattusha in central Anatolia (sixteenth to thirteenth centuries BCE). The overwhelming bulk of this material falls into two quite distinct groups. There are on the one hand Luwian incantations embedded in therapeutic rituals originating in Kizzuwatna (classical Cilicia Pedias) in southeastern Anatolia, and on the other scattered Luwian words in Hittite texts. As shown by Yakubovich (2010, 15–73), the language of the incantations reflects a ritual koine developed in Kizzuwatna (Kizzuwatna Luwian), while the Luwianisms in Hittite contexts belong to another koineized dialect (Empire Luwian), developed under and promulgated by the central administration of the Empire of Hattusha.

The ritual incantations are edited in transliteration by Starke (1985), who showed that the numerous incomplete manuscripts represent copies of no more than a dozen compositions. Although these rituals are presented as being dictated by named practitioners, some said to come from Kizzuwatna, Miller (2004, 469–511), Christiansen (2006, 22–30), and others have convincingly argued that the rituals as we have them are the product of a

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complex redactional process by Hattusha scribes. Some may be dated by linguistic criteria to "early Middle Hittite" (fifteenth century), while others are surely from the early Empire period (fourteenth century). Nevertheless, the grammatical consistency of the language of the incantations supports the idea that they ultimately reflect dictation by Luwian practitioners from Kizzuwatna, even if the ritual instructions in Hittite likely do not (thus with Yakubovich 2010, 280).

Since it is now undisputed that there are already Luwian loanwords in Old Hittite (see below), one must restrict the notion of "Luwianism" in Hittite context to words showing unequivocally Luwian inflection. Such forms displaying features agreeing with those of the Empire hieroglyphic Luwian texts and differentiating them from Kizzuwatna Luwian are restricted to New Hittite (Empire) compositions (Yakubovich 2010, 54–62). There are some Luwian-inflected words in Middle Hittite texts, but they become commonplace only in New Hittite (summary in Melchert 2005, 448–52, now in need of revision). A complete up-to-date collection of the Luwianisms in Hittite is currently lacking, but it is unlikely that the present picture will change substantially.

A few lines of Luwian occurring in texts belonging to the state cult of the Old Kingdom of Hattusha (sixteenth to fifteenth centuries BCE) are too fragmentary to be assigned to any particular dialect. There is also tantalizingly at least one fragment of a letter, arguably two (Starke 1985, 368–9). Their use of the clause-initial conjunction *pā* agrees with Kizzuwatna Luwian vs. the Empire koine, but since this feature is likely an archaism (with Yakubovich 2010, 62–3), it alone is insufficient to identify the dialect. A few features of the "songs" of Istanuwa and Lallupiya suggest they belong to a dialect (or dialects?) different from the Kizzuwatna and Empire koines (Melchert 2003a, 174–5), but these texts (actually mere incipits of ritual songs) are too short and difficult of interpretation to allow for any definitive conclusions. Their principal importance lies in reminding us that many more dialects of Luwian surely existed than our very limited and selective evidence attests (see for these texts Starke 1985, 294–353).

Inscriptions in the Anatolian hieroglyphs are attested from the thirteenth to eighth centuries BCE and over a broad geographic range: from Karabel, Karakuyu (Torbalı), Sipylos, and Latmos in the far west of Anatolia, from Hattusha and other sites in central Anatolia, from as far to the southeast as Ancoz in Commagene, and from as far south as Hama and Restan in Syria (map in Hawkins 2003, 142). Once again this blanket description requires significant elaboration. Chronologically, these texts may be usefully divided into three periods (Hawkins 2013a, 26): (i) those of the thirteenth century from the last part of the Empire of Hattusha; (ii) those of a transition period roughly 1200–1000; (iii) those of the post-Empire, Iron Age "Neo-Hittite" states from southern Anatolia and northern Syria dating from 1000–700.

Most inscriptions from the Empire period consist only of names and titles, the latter written logographically, and the *language* in which they are to be read can only be inferred, not proven. See the careful discussion by Hawkins (2003, 140–41), who adds that the same remark applies to most seal impressions, making them almost entirely irrelevant as evidence for the Luwian language (for a few post-Empire exceptions with isolated Luwian words see texts XIII 1, 4 and 11 in Hawkins 2000, 574–81). However, we do have a few Empire texts of considerable length, in Luwian, from the last two Hittite kings, Tuthaliya IV and Suppiluliuma II. These are fundamentally dedicatory in nature, but include

accounts of royal military exploits and building activities. The texts from Emirgazi and Yalburt, in west central Anatolia, are assuredly by Tuthaliya IV, but both present many problems of reading and interpretation. One may receive an accurate impression of their content from the editions by Hawkins (1995, 66–102) – for Yalburt see also the *editio princeps* by Poetto (1993) – but revisions have already been made (e.g. Hawkins 2006, 54–9), and there will be more. No adequate edition of the badly weathered Nişantaş text of Suppiluliuma II exists, while both the interpretation and even the attribution of the Südburg inscription to him are highly controversial (see Payne, 2015, 78–84, with references).

Hawkins (2003, 146–7) already suggested that the previous perception of a "dark age" of two to three centuries between the fall of the Empire of Hattusha around 1200 BCE and the "revival" of Hittite culture by the smaller polities of southeastern Anatolia and northern Syria needed serious revision. Recent discoveries have further strengthened the case for assuming rather that there was a considerable degree of continuity in terms of culture and the writing of Luwian in hieroglyphs through the transitional period of the twelfth and eleventh centuries. Orthography, phraseology, and content argue for dating the Karahöyük inscription to the twelfth century (Hawkins 2000, 289–90), likewise the set of inscriptions by Hartapu from Tabal, however the discrepancy with the dating of the accompanying sculpted figure is to be explained (Hawkins 2000, 429, 434 and 438–9). Use of the archaic phrase DEUS *430+*RA/I* for "every god" or "all the gods", but with rhotacism (/ponara/i-/), in the recently published Karakuyu (Torbali) inscription (thus with Oreshko 2013, 377 vs. ibid. 378) recalls the same combination of features in the Hartapu inscriptions (DEUS-*na/i* *430 and [*t*]*u-pi+ra/i* "strikes/struck" – see Hawkins 2000, 438) and suggests a similar immediate post-Empire dating (Oreshko 2013, 386 argues on different grounds for ca. 1250–1150 BCE).

The Malatya inscriptions previously argued by Hawkins (2000, 187–8 and 296) to date from no later than the eleventh and tenth centuries (arguably the late 12th) have now been joined by the newly published stele of Suhi I from Karkemish (Dinçol et al. 2014a), which on orthographic and historical grounds must be dated to the end of the eleventh century or beginning of the 10th (Dinçol et al. 2014b, 130). Also datable to the eleventh century are the Aleppo temple inscriptions of Taita, self-designated King of Palishtin (see for text, dating, and historical context Hawkins 2011). The new Arsuz inscriptions of a Suppiluliuma, likewise with the title King of Walishtin, now permit a likely sequencing of texts from Amuq forming a continuum from the eleventh to the ninth centuries (Dinçol et al. 2015, 62–3). Finally, because of its notoriety I should mention the "Ankara" silver bowl inscription (probably of Syrian origin) that on epigraphic grounds should be dated to the transitional period, whether or not it alludes to much earlier historical events (see for the most recent discussion Payne 2015, 84–98).

While these welcome recent discoveries have done much to fill the previous gap from the twelfth and eleventh centuries, the overwhelming majority of Luwian hieroglyphic texts date from the tenth–eighth centuries and originate in the various minor "Neo-Hittite" states from southeastern Anatolia and northern Syria that formed after the fall of the Empire of Hattusha. While the term "Neo-Hittite" may seem confusing, it is fully justified, since these states were, and presented themselves as, the political and cultural heirs of the Hittites. Most of the texts represent inscriptions on stone, both natural rock faces and man-made structures. Like the inscriptions of the late Hittite kings, they are

largely dedicatory in nature, but also describe military exploits and building activities of their authors (as seen by Cancik 2002, their textual composition imitates the practices of Assyrian royal inscriptions). There are also a few inscriptions on bowls of stone and metal (see Hawkins 2000, texts XII 3, 14, 15 and 16).

Of a very different nature are the few texts incised on soft lead strips (which could be rolled up for preservation and transport). Those attested thus far are of two genres. First, we have personal letters, those found in Assur, but almost certainly originating from Karkemish or vicinity (Hawkins 2000, 533–55), and the Kırşehir (Yassıhöyük) letter from Tabal (Akdoğan and Hawkins 2010 and Weeden 2013). Second, there are the economic documents from Kululu (Tabal) that record lists of commodities to be distributed to various individuals (Hawkins 2000, 503–13).

Sociolinguistic Status of Luwian

It is commonplace that the written records of ancient corpus languages that have come down to us present a very partial and skewed picture of their sociolinguistic situation. Our documents tend to be the products of social elites and to show a strong bias towards political, administrative, and hieratic content. It should be clear from the preceding summary that our documentation for Luwian is no exception.

Nevertheless, we may make some reasonable hypotheses about the presence of Luwian speakers and the use of Luwian as a spoken and written language – with the caveat that their degree of plausibility varies markedly for different times and places and that new discoveries may require that they be modified or replaced.

Our first (indirect) evidence for Luwian comes from Akkadian texts of the twentieth to eighteenth centuries BCE from the Assyrian trading colonies in central Anatolia, most notably Kanesh (modern Kültepe) on the Upper Halys River. Since personal names may be borrowed for various reasons, the attestation of a modest number of Luwian names in these texts (see most recently Yakubovich 2010, 208–23) does not assure the presence of Luwian speakers. However, we also find several loanwords in the Old Assyrian texts that on phonological and morphological grounds must be of Luwian origin: *ḫiniššannum* and *kulitannum* (names for vessels), *targumannum* "interpreter", and *upatinnum* "royal land grant" (Dercksen 2007, 31–5 and Yakubovich 2010, 208, note 2). While some of these could have been borrowed through Hittite, there is no evidence for a Hittitized variant of Luwian *kullit-* (*contra* Dercksen 2007, 33). It is also noteworthy that Luwian *tarkumm(a)i-* (and its Hittitized variant) only means "report, pass on (verbally)" and never "translate" (thus with Starke 1990, 273–5), suggesting that the Akkadian sense reflects use of the Luwian word in a face-to-face multilingual contact situation that *did* involve translation. We may tentatively conclude that at least some Luwian speakers were present in the area of Kanesh at the beginning of the second millennium BCE (compare Yakubovich 2010, 223).

Yakubovich (2010, 227–39) has argued for a Luwian superstrate in Old Hittite. The evidence is limited and subject to more than one interpretation. It is at least noteworthy that prehistoric Luwian loanwords into Hittite include minimally the respective titles for the king and queen, *tabarna-* and *tawananna-* (see Melchert 2003a, 18–20 and for the first also Yakubovich 2010, 229–32). Rieken (2016a) has now argued that the title

tuḫukant(i)- for the crown prince is likewise a loanword from Luwian. For a discussion of the significance of Luwian personal names in the Old Hittite Kingdom, including those of kings, see Yakubovich (2010, 248–53). It remains difficult to assess just how many Luwian speakers had been integrated into Old Hittite society.

We are on firmer ground when we come to the Early Empire (Tuthaliya I to Suppiluliuma I). The prevalence of Luwian onomastics, the treatment of Luwian in instruction texts aimed at members of the bureaucracy and the military, and above all a series of unmistakably contact-induced changes in Hittite grammar together argue that by this period many if not most Hittite speakers were Luwian bilinguals. Luwianisms (unassimilated Luwian words) also appear in our bureaucratic documents (see van den Hout 2007, 234, revising Melchert 2005), but their still low number suggests that Luwian was primarily a spoken idiom, regarded as unsuited for official written use (see *in extenso* Yakubovich 2010, 260–72).

Events of the second half of the fourteenth century brought dramatic changes. First, Suppiluliuma I annexed portions of northern Syria and resettled large numbers of inhabitants to Hattusha and surrounding areas (Bryce 2005, 163; full text in Beckman 1996, 39–40). A few years later, Mursili II defeated the western Anatolian kingdom of Arzawa in a campaign that reached the Aegean coast and likewise forcibly transferred thousands of people to the Hittite homeland (Bryce 2005, 194–7). As often (compare Melchert 2007, 529), there was a slight time lag between the concomitant societal changes and their linguistic effects, and the language of Suppiluliuma I is that of the early New Kingdom ("late Middle-Hittite") – see Neu 1979. However, the language of his son Mursili II is transitional, showing the first signs of a series of major innovations in Hittite grammar, some of them attributable to Luwian influence – as well as the first use of the "Glossenkeil" (◀) to explicitly mark Luwianisms in Hittite texts.

A connection between the historical events and the linguistic changes has long been acknowledged, but there has been much debate about just what conclusions should be drawn regarding the sociolinguistic status of Hittite and Luwian in the later Empire of Hattusha. Already Rosenkranz (1938, 282) proposed that by this time Hittite existed only as a language of the imperial court and chancery (written and spoken), no longer natively transmitted. Reception of this characterization has been mixed: see the summaries by van den Hout (2007, 227–30) and Yakubovich (2010, 304–6), including reference to my own skeptical stance (Melchert, 2003a, 12–14 and 2005, 457–8). However, van den Hout (2007, 235–42) has now persuasively argued that the concentration of the use of the "Glossenkeil" in texts of an ephemeral nature requires the presence of large numbers of Luwian speakers and either extensive bilingualism or diglossia. Yakubovich (2010, Chapter Five) has progressed much further, making a strong case for what he terms (2010, 307) asymmetrical bilingualism in Hattusha and nearby areas in the late Empire of Hattusha, where a minority of Hittite native speakers fully bilingual in Luwian coexisted with a larger set of Luwian native speakers with varying competence in Hittite, and with monolingual Luwian speakers. Naturally, our official texts reflect only the first two groups centering on the imperial court and chancery; the existence of the third group may only be inferred. However, since the mass deportations from Luwian-speaking areas cited above surely included all social classes, there can be little doubt that they were present, surely in substantial numbers.

Convergent factors argue that the area known in Hittite times as the "Lower Land" southwest of the Halys River and near the Salt Lake (modern Tuz Gölü) was a predominantly Luwian area from the late third millennium (Yakubovich 2010, 243–8) through to the first millennium, when it was part of Tabal (Bryce 2005, 353–4 and 2012, 141). The economic documents of the Kululu lead strips suggest that northeastern Tabal was Luwian-speaking at least by the eighth century BCE.

The Luwian incantations in the Hattusha rituals from Kizzuwatna testify to Luwian presence there from the Early Empire period, though one must reckon with competition from Hurrian (see in detail Yakubovich 2010, 272–85). For arguments for continued use of Luwian in post-Empire Cilicia (Que) by the non-elite population see Yakubovich 2015a.

The extent of the use of Luwian as a spoken language in the other Neo-Hittite states east of Tabal and Que, i.e., in southeastern Anatolia, the Upper Euphrates, and northern Syria remains uncertain. Bryce (2012, 52–60) expresses justified skepticism about large movements of Luwian-speaking refugees into these areas after the fall of the Empire of Hattusha and argues that any Luwian presence there reflects earlier settlement under the Hittite administration. However, one may question whether his final conclusion that "the Luwian-speaking inhabitants of these kingdoms probably constituted only a minority of their populations" applies equally to all of the areas in question.

Also controversial is the status of Luwian as a spoken language in western Anatolia during the second millennium. Yakubovich (2010, Chapter 2) argued at length against the presence of any significant numbers of Luwian speakers, suggesting that the aristocracy of the area spoke Proto- (or Pre-) Carian, rather than Luwian. This claim elicited the sharpest criticism of any portion of his monograph and began an extended debate: see in part Hawkins 2013a, Oreshko 2013, 401–9, Yakubovich 2013, 108–21, and Hawkins 2013b. A full discussion is impossible here, but some remarks are in order. First, I must emphasize that we have no means to securely identify the spoken language of even the elites of western Anatolia in the second millennium, so all hypotheses must depend on arguable indirect evidence. Second, it is hard to believe that the mass deportations from Arzawa by Mursili II did not play a major role in the Luwianization of Hattusha and surrounding areas from the fourteenth century onwards. In particular, the formation of an Empire koine quite distinct from that of the Kizzuwatna rituals argues for the influx of large numbers of speakers of *multiple* Luwian dialects, not just that of Kizzuwatna. Finally, none of the arguments of Yakubovich (2010 and 2013) are incompatible with the assumption of migrations of Luwian speakers *westward* in the first centuries of the second millennium, just before the Luwians appear in Hittite sources. The question must for the present simply be left open.

Contact between Luwian and Other Languages

Before treating the issue of possible contact effects between Luwian and other specific languages, we should note that Luwian shares in at least two phonological "areal features" of the region of its attestation. First, aside from two secondary examples due to loss of an initial dorsal stop – Iron Age Luwian /ruwan/ "formerly" and the name of the Stag-god *Runtiya-* (Melchert 1994, 256 with references) – Luwian has no word-initial /r-/, a

restriction common to all of the Indo-European Anatolian languages as well as Greek, Armenian, and non-Indo-European Hattic and Hurrian. Second, due to what must be a post-Proto-Anatolian innovation that spread through the individual Indo-European Anatolian languages, Luwian in its attested form has only voiceless obstruents in word-initial position, as seen also in Hurrian (Melchert 1994, 18–20, *pace* Kloekhorst 2010).

The question of contact effects between Luwian and the other Indo-European Anatolian languages is complicated by two factors: first, it is unlikely that pre-Luwian speakers ever lost direct contact with the other prehistoric dialects; second, the evidence for and our understanding of the languages beyond Hittite and Luwian is seriously limited. It is thus often difficult to distinguish between shared common innovations (modeled in terms of a "Stammbaum" or of dialect geography) and borrowings from one of the already differentiated dialects into another (lexical and grammatical). On the general problem of shared common innovations see Melchert 2003b, and on developments in the reflexive enclitic pronoun Yakubovich 2010, 173–82. The results of both investigations point to a geographically central prehistoric position of Luwian with respect to the other dialects. The focus in what follows, however, will be on clearly post-differentiation borrowings and interference effects.

All truly compelling examples of *post-differentiation* contact effects between Luwian and another Indo-European Anatolian language involve Hittite, and except for a very few arguable cases they are unidirectional – from Luwian to Hittite. As per the preceding section, effects of Luwian on Hittite from the fourteenth century BCE have long been acknowledged. It was the merit of Starke (1990) to show that already our oldest attested Hittite contains a substantial number of lexical borrowings from Luwian, far more than previously recognized.

Yakubovich (2010, Chapter Three, especially 182–205) further demonstrated that the Hittite reflexive particle *-z(a)* is the result of borrowing from Luwian through a complex series of developments that presupposes a longer and more intense prehistoric contact between Luwian and Hittite than required by mere lexical borrowing. The weight of this *linguistic* argument in support of his claim (2010, 243) that the prehistoric center of gravity of the Luwians was the Konya plain ("Lower Land" in Hittite sources) or alternatively (2013, 114–5) the valley of the Sakarya (classical Sangarios) has not been properly appreciated in the subsequent debate about the Luwians in western Anatolia. Goedegebuure (2008, 171–5) has argued for significant effects of Luwian on Hattic, but the evidence adduced is limited and debatable.

As discussed in the preceding section, Luwian linguistic effects on Hittite during the Old Kingdom (leaving aside onomastics) are arguable. One should note, however, that there are some Luwianisms (NB: not loanwords) in Middle and New Script copies of assured Old Hittite texts of various genres (see Melchert 2005, 448–9 for examples marked with ^{L}). It is far from obvious that all or even most of these represent interpolations by the copyists (even if use of the "Glossenkeil" is such).

I identified (Melchert 2007) eight innovations that occurred in "Middle Hittite" (late Old to early New Kingdom). Yakubovich (2010, 268–71) argued that all of these can and most should be analyzed as due to contact with Luwian. At least four are compelling: (i) the required use of the reflexive particle *-z(a)* in nominal sentences or with the verb "to be" *just* with the first and second persons (totally unmotivated within Hittite);

(ii) replacement of common gender nominative plural enclitic *-e* "they" with *-at* (matching *-ata* in Luwian); (iii) leveling of *ammuk* "me" for *ūk* "I" (but notably not of *tuk* "thee" for *zik* "thou", just as in Luwian); (iv) confusion of the common gender nominative and accusative plural case endings (notably agreeing with Empire and Iron Age Luwian, not Kizzuwatna Luwian). See on the last three features also Rieken (2006, 274–7).

As described above, the second half of the fourteenth century brought a massive new influx of Luwian speakers into the Hattusha court and chancery. Yakubovich (2010, 308–67) argues that a number of New Hittite innovations beginning with Mursili II are due to interference effects reflecting the (imperfect) second-language acquisition of Hittite by Luwian native speakers. These include: (i) a lexically diffused replacement of [e] by [i] due not to regular sound change but to hypercorrection by Luwian speakers whose own language had no phonemic contrast between /e/ and /i/; (ii) diffusion of the Luwian pattern of "*i*-mutation" in nominal paradigms; (iii) nominative-accusative common gender plurals in *-aš*; (iv) clitic iteration (e.g., *n=at=ši(y)=at* "and it to him/her it", with redundant repetition of the direct object pronoun). For the last see already Rieken (2006, 278).

Before leaving the topic of Luwian influence on Hittite, we should also indicate that from the prehistoric period through to the end of the Empire of Hattusha Luwian not only was the direct source of loanwords into Hittite, but also played an important intermediary role in transmitting loanwords from other languages, mostly but not exclusively Hurrian. As shown by Starke (1990, 210–21), the *-t-* that appears sporadically in the oblique cases of such words in Hittite does not reflect any Hurrian morpheme, but rather the suffix *-it-* that Luwian used to adapt most loanwords. One should also stress that these words include Wanderwörter whose ultimate source is unknown.

In contrast to the extensive demonstrated effects of Luwian upon Hittite, from prehistoric times to the end of the Empire of Hattusha – examples for Hittite influence on Luwian are limited to a mere handful of alleged lexical borrowings, all thus far arguable. In a Kizzuwatna ritual context we find the hapax ^{GIŠ}*kattaluzzi=ša* "threshold". This *may* reflect a genuine Luwian neuter noun with a stem **kattaluzzit-* borrowed from Hittite common gender *kattaluzzi-* (Starke 1990, 214), but a Hittite loanword for this vocabulary item in Kizzuwatna Luwian (not Empire Luwian!) seems odd, and one may wonder whether it is instead a hybrid created by the Hittite copyist. Since the Luwian word for "ruler, king" is acknowledged to be /xandawad/t(i)-/, Iron Age Luwian /xassuss(a)ra-/ "queen" has been alleged to be a borrowing of Hittite *ḫaššuššara-*, transparently derived from *ḫaššu-* "king". This is not implausible for an official title, but the implied premise that Luwian could not natively have such an asymmetry between "king" and "queen" is hardly assured. I have argued (Melchert 2013) that the Iron Age Luwian expression /wanaxa/ "away from" identified by Yakubovich is a borrowing of the matching Hittite *awan arḫa*, but for a very different analysis see Yakubovich (2012). Even if one accepts all suggested Hittite loans into Luwian, their number remains miniscule.

There is a widespread view that the Lydians in the second millennium were situated in the northwest of Asia Minor and only moved southward into their classical location later, presumably entering into a super- or substrate relationship with the Luwians: see among others Beekes (2002, 205–17). Yakubovich (2010, 112–7) has challenged this scenario, but even if it is true, one must state emphatically that thus far the only effects demonstrated are limited to a few personal names (most convincing is Lydian *Tiwda-*, surely based on a Luwian theophoric *Tiwada-* "Sun-god", since the native Lydian reflex of **diw-* appears in

ciw- "god"). There will thus be no further discussion here of putative contact effects between Luwian and Lydian.

An adequate discussion of possible Luwian loanwords into Greek is not feasible here. A new critical reassessment updating Neumann 1961 is much needed. I note only that such borrowings involve both native Luwian lexemes and words transmitted by Luwian from other languages. For reasons discussed by Yakubovich (2015a, 36–41), the likely place of transmission is Cilicia.

Kizzuwatna is a culturally and linguistically mixed Luwian-Hurrian region since our earliest sources. Hence the presence of Hurrian loanwords and Hurrianisms in many of the therapeutic Luwian rituals originating in Kizzuwatna. Yakubovich (2010, 47–53) has made plausible arguments that the creation *just in* Kizzuwatna Luwian of agglutinative forms in *-aššš-anz-* of the relational adjective in *-aššša-* to mark plurality of the possessor results from interference from Hurrian, in a situation where Hurrian native speakers were learning Luwian as a second language.

The most notable loanword from Semitic into Luwian is *ḫalāl(i)-* "pure", attested thus far in Kizzuwatna Luwian (though its absence in Iron Age Luwian may be accidental). Surely a factor in its adoption was that it could be fit easily into the native nominal morphology: compare *ādduwal(i)-* "wicked, evil". We also find just once in Iron Age Luwian /sariyassi-/ "eunuch" < Akkadian *ša rēši* (lit. "he of the head"), whose shape has likely been influenced by the more usual calque /wassinassi-/ "he of the body/person" (see Hawkins 2000, 349). On Phoenician as the primary language of the Karatepe and Çineköy Phoenician-Luwian bilingual texts from Cilicia and interference effects on the Luwian version see Yakubovich (2015a, 44–8).

Grammatical Sketch

The following description applies to both Kizzuwatna and Empire/Iron Age Luwian unless noted otherwise. We know too little of the Istanuvian dialect to take it into account here.

Phonology

The Luwian phonemic inventory consists of the following as in Table 13.1:

Table 13.1 Luwian phonemic inventory.

Stops:	/p/	/t/		/k/	/k^{w}/
	/b/	/d/		/g/	/g^{w}/
Affricate:		/t^{s}/			
Fricatives:		/s/		/x/	/x^{w}/
				/ɣ/	/ɣ^{w}/
Nasals:	/m/	/n/			
Liquids:		/r/, /l/			
Glides:	/w/		/j/		
Vowels:	/i/, /i:/			/u/, /u:/	
			/o/, /o:/		
		/a/, /a:/			

The exact nature of the contrast in the stops and the pairs of dorsal fricatives remains difficult to determine; it may well have been fortis versus lenis instead of voiceless versus voiced. In any case, in cuneiform the voiceless or fortis set are spelled as geminates in intervocalic position, and they certainly closed a preceding syllable (Melchert 1994, 13–21 and Kloekhorst 2014, 544–7). The voiced dorsal stops /g/ and /g^{w}/ are rare, being restricted to position after sonorants. The dorsal fricatives may well have been uvular rather than velar; for the existence of labialized /x^{w}/ and /g^{w}/ see Kloekhorst (2006, 97–101) and Melchert (2011). There is a contrast between /s/ and /ss/ and between simple and geminate nasals and liquids in intervocalic position.

It is likely, though not strictly provable, that intervocalic *[d] became a flap or some kind of coronal continuant already in the prehistory of Luwian. In any case, *only* in Iron Age (first millennium) Luwian the result alternated with [l], and both of these (and occasionally [n]) in turn alternated with [r] (Morpurgo Davies 1982–3 and Rieken and Yakubovich 2010).

There is no doubt that Luwian has phonetically both short and long vowels, but due to a series of prehistoric changes (Melchert 1994, 239–47, following Eichner and Morpurgo Davies) the environments for a phonemic contrast are quite limited. Positing of the vowels /o/ and /o:/ distinct from /u/ and /u:/ is based entirely on the spelling contrast between <u> and <ú> in Luwian written in cuneiform, which follows the same basic pattern as in Hittite with differences in detail (Rieken 2016b). While there is no reason not to infer the existence of /o/ and /o:/ also for Empire/Iron Age Luwian written in hieroglyphs, it should be stressed that Luwian short [o] was likely of restricted distribution, and the *phonemic* contrast between /o/ and /u/ and /o:/ and /u:/ was also limited in scope.

Nominal Inflection

Luwian nouns and adjectives inflect for gender, number, and case. There are two genders, common and neuter, and two numbers, singular and plural. At least Empire Luwian shows a contrast between count (distributive) and collective (set) plural for some common gender nouns: e.g. nom. sg. *lalamiš* "receipt" with collective nom.-acc. pl. *lalāma* beside unattested count nom.-acc. pl. *lalaminzi**. Luwian has a maximum of seven cases: nominative, accusative, vocative, ergative, genitive, dative-locative, and ablative-instrumental. Note that Empire/Iron Age Luwian has merged the common gender nominative and accusative plural. The rare vocative singular is attested only in Kizzuwatna Luwian; otherwise the nominative is used. The existence of a genitive case in Kizzuwatna Luwian is debated, and the existence of a genitive ending /-as(s)a/ in Iron Age Luwian is unprovable due to limitations of the hieroglyphic orthography. See on the complex situation of the use of the genitive and the relational adjective to mark possession Melchert (2012) with particular reference to Yakubovich (2008). For the distribution of the dative-locative singular endings see Yakubovich (2015b, section 6.2). The ablative-instrumental does not distinguish number. The Luwian endings may be schematized as in Table 13.2:

Table 13.2 Luwian nominal inflection.

	Singular		*Plural*	
	KLuwian	*E/I-ALuwian*	*KLuwian*	*E/I-ALuwian*
Nom.C.	/-s/	/-s/	/-nt^{s}i/	/-nt^{s}i/
Acc.C.	/-n/	/-n/	/-nt^{s}/	/-nt^{s}i/
Voc.	-Ø	---	---	---
N-ANt.	-Ø, /-n/	-Ø, /-n/	/-a/, -Ø	/-a/
Erg.	/-antis/	/-antis/	/-antint^{s}i/	/-antint^{s}i/
Gen.	/-as(s)i/, /-assa/[?]	/-as/, /-as(s)i/	---	/-as/, /-as(s)i/[?]
Dat.-Loc.	/-i/, /-a/	/-i/, /-a/	/-ant^{s}/	/-ant^{s}/
Abl.-Inst.		/-adi/		

Two further phenomena should be noted. First, frequently in Kizzuwatna Luwian and virtually obligatorily in Empire/Iron Age Luwian the neuter nom.-acc. singular is followed by a particle /-sa/, which appears as /-t^{s}a/ after the *a*-stem ending /-an/. Second, by the feature known as "*i*-mutation" many stems obligatorily insert an *-i-* between the stem and ending *just* in the nominative and accusative of the common gender (see Starke 1990, 56–64 for a synchronic description, but compare also the reformulation by Yakubovich 2015b, section 6.4).

Pronouns

The near-deictic demonstrative in Luwian is /t^{s}á:-/, while /abá:-/ serves as the far-deictic demonstrative and the orthotonic third person pronoun. Our understanding of their inflection has been much advanced by Goedegebuure (2007) and (2010), the gist of whose synchronic analysis is followed here. Table 13.3 shows the paradigm of /abá:-/, with unattested forms assured by those of /t^{s}á:-/:

Table 13.3 Luwian demonstrative pronouns.

	KLuwian	*E/I-ALuwian*		*KLuwian*	*E/I-ALuwian*
NSgC	/abá:s/	/abá:s/	NPlC	/abí:nt^{s}i/*	/abá:nt^{s}i/
ASgC	/abá:n/	/abá:n/	APlC	/abí:nt^{s}/	/abá:nt^{s}i/
N-ASgNt	/abá:/*	/abá:/	N-APlNt	/abá:/*	/abá:ya/, /abá:/
Dat-LocSg	/abáti/	/abáti/	Dat-LocPl	/abátant^{s}/*	/abátant^{s}/
Abl-Inst	/abá:di(n)/	/abín/		/abá:di(n)/	/abín/

The inflection is entirely that of an *a*-stem: on the common gender nominative and accusative plural forms in Kizzuwatna Luwian and the neuter nom.-acc. plural in Empire/Iron Age Luwian, which do *not* show "*i*-mutation", see Melchert (2009). Thus far, possession is expressed in Kizzuwatna Luwian with the relational adjective /abassa-/. Empire/Iron Age Luwian also attests a genitive /abasi/. The ablative-instrumental forms also serve as adverbs "thus, in that way" and "there".

As in Hittite, the nominative and accusative of the relative-interrogative stem /kʷi-/~/kʷa-/ show true *i*-stem inflection. The only exception is that in Empire/Iron Age Luwian the neuter nom.-acc. singular appears as /kʷan-tˢa/ by "reverse *i*-mutation", versus expected /kʷi:/ in Kizzuwatna Luwian (the latter is still preserved in Empire/Iron Age Luwian as a subordinating conjunction "when"). The rest of the paradigm shares the endings of the demonstratives (for the dative-locative and ablative-instrumental see again Goedgebuure 2007 and 2010). See Table 13.4:

Table 13.4 Luwian relative-interrogative pronouns.

	KLuwian	*E/I-ALuwian*		*KLuwian*	*E/I-ALuwian*
NSgC	/kʷi:s/	/kʷi:s/	NPlC	/kʷi:ntˢi/	/kʷi:ntˢi/
ASgC	/kʷi:n/	/kʷi:n/	APlC	/kʷi:ntˢ/*	/kʷi:ntˢi/
N-ASgNt	/kʷi:/	/kʷan-tˢa/	N-APlNt		/kʷaya/
Dat-LocSg	/kʷati/	/kʷati/	Dat-LocPl		/kʷatantˢ/
Abl-Inst	/kʷadi(n)/	/kʷadi/		/kʷadi(n)/	/kʷadi/

As in Hittite, the orthotonic personal pronouns of the first and second person show a limited inflection. Due to the nature of the text corpora, most of our evidence comes from Iron Age Luwian. The use of the non-subject forms also as subjects except in the second singular has already been mentioned. For the reading of the Iron Age Luwian first and second plural as ending in /-antˢ/ (not /-untˢ/ as previously given) see Yakubovich (2010, 66–9). See Table 13.5:

Table 13.5 Luwian orthotonic personal pronouns of 1st and 2nd person.

	KLuwian	*E/I-ALuwian*		*KLuwian*	*E/I-ALuwian*
1stSg			1stPl		
Nom.		/amu/	Nom.		/a:ntˢantˢ/
Dat.-Acc.		/amu/	Dat.-Acc.	/a:ntˢ(as)/	/a:ntˢantˢ/
2ndSg					
Nom.	/ti:/ʔ	/ti:/	Nom.		/u:ntˢantˢ/
Dat.-Acc.		/tu:/	Dat.-Acc.	/u:ntˢ(as)/	/u:ntˢantˢ/
Abl.-Inst.		/tuwari/	Abl.-Inst.		/u:ntˢari/

It is doubtful that there is any functional difference between the Kizzuwatna Luwian plural forms with and without the final /-as/, but we cannot be sure of this. The attested Iron Age ablative-instrumental forms show "rhotacism" with /-ari/ < /-adi/.

We have virtually no evidence for the first and second person enclitic personal pronouns in Kizzuwatna Luwian. In Empire/Iron Age Luwian the first person singular enclitic /-mu/ is attested in both dative and accusative function, and we may safely assume the same for second singular /-du/, first plural /-antˢ/, and second plural /-mmantˢ/, thus far attested as datives. In the third person Kizzuwatna Luwian preserves the more archaic common gender accusative plural /-as/ and dative plural /-mmas/. These have been

renewed as /-ada/ and /-mant^{s}/ in Iron Age Luwian. The rest of the paradigm is the same in both dialects as in Table 13.6:

Table 13.6 Luwian enclitic personal pronouns.

	KLuwian	*E/I-ALuwian*		*KLuwian*	*E/I-ALuwian*
NSgC	/-as/	/-as/	NPlC	/-ada/	/-ada~-ara/
ASgC	/-an/	/-an/	APlC	/-as/	/-ada~-ara/
N-ASgNt	/-ada/	/-ada~-ara/	N-APlNt	/-ada~-ara/	/-ada~-ara/
DatSg	/-du/	/-du~-ru/	DatPl	/-mmas/	/-mmant^{s}/

Empire/Iron Age Luwian has special enclitic reflexive forms in the singular for all three persons, /-mi/, /-di/, /-di/ (the latter appear also as [-ri]). Kizzuwatna Luwian also attests reflexive /-di/ for the third singular. The plural enclitic personal pronouns serve as reflexives at least in Iron Age Luwian: /-ant^{s}/, /-mmant^{s}/ and /-mmant^{s}/. In Iron Age Luwian first singular /-mu/ competes with /-mi/ in use as a reflexive.

Verbal Inflection

The Luwian finite verb is inflected for the expected three persons, singular and plural number, active and medio-passive voice, and indicative and imperative moods. The formal distinction between the "*mi*-conjugation" and the "*hi*-conjugation" known from Hittite is preserved only in the third person singular. For the distribution of the alternating endings with initial /t/ and /d/ see Morpurgo Davies (1982–3). As she indicates, those with initial /d/ are subject to alternation with /r/ in Iron Age Luwian. The nature of our corpora leads to significant gaps in our knowledge of the personal endings in both dialects, especially for the medio-passive. Table 13.7 shows what is currently known:

Table 13.7 Inflection of finite verbs in Luwian.

Present Indicative Active					
	KLuwian	*E/I-ALuwian*		*KLuwian*	*E/I-ALuwian*
1stSg	/-wi/	/-wi/	1stPl	/-unni/	
2ndSg	/-si/, /-ti/$^{?}$, /-tis/$^{?}$	/-si/, /-tis/	2ndPl	/-tani/	/-tani/
3rdSg	/-ti/~/-di/, /-ai/	/-ti/~/-di/, /-ai/	3rdPl	/-anti/	/-anti/
Present Indicative Medio-passive					
	KLuwian	*E/I-ALuwian*		*KLuwian*	*E/I-ALuwian*
2ndSg			2ndPl	/-tuwar(i)/	
3rdSg	/-ar(i)/, /-tari/		3rdPl	/-antari/	

(*Continued*)

Table 13.7 (Continued)

Preterite Indicative Active					
	KLuwian	*E/I-ALuwian*		*KLuwian*	*E/I-ALuwian*
1stSg	/-xa/~/-ɣa/	/-xa(n)/~/-ɣa(n)/	1stPl		
2ndSg		/-ta/~/-da/	2ndPl		
3rdSg	/-ta/~/-da/	/-ta/~/-da/	3rdPl	/-a(w)nta/	/-a(w)nta/
Imperative Active					
	KLuwian	*E/I-ALuwian*		*KLuwian*	*E/I-ALuwian*
1stSg	/-lu/[?]				
2ndSg	-Ø	-Ø		/-tan/	/-tanu/~/-danu/*
3rdSg	/-tu/~/-du/	/-tu/~/-du/		/-antu/	/-antu/
Imperative Medio-passive					
	KLuwian	*E/I-ALuwian*		*KLuwian*	*E/I-ALuwian*
3rdSg	/-aru/, /-taru/	/-aru/	3rdPl	/-antaru/	/-antaru/*

Mention should also be made of the Iron Age Luwian preterite mediopassives formed by addition of a reflexive particle /-si/ (Rieken 2004 with references). Both dialects of Luwian attest an infinitive in /-una/ and a participle in /-mma-/ (which shows "*i*-mutation"). Iron Age Luwian also has a form in /-min(a)/ used predicatively in deontic function: "(is/are) to be __ed".

Syntax

It is reasonably certain that the functionally unmarked word order is S O V. The sentence negation and preverbs regularly appear directly before the finite verb. Demonstratives, attributive adjectives and adnominal genitives usually appear before their head noun, but exceptions in Empire/Iron Age Luwian are not rare (for a comprehensive analysis of word order in noun phrases see now Bauer 2014).

As in Hittite, clause-level enclitics, including anaphoric pronouns and various particles, appear attached either to interclausal conjunctions or the first accented word in their clause by so-called "Wackernagel's Law". The order within the "clitic chain" is fixed: quotative particle+dative/reflexive+nominative/accusative+local particle. Most constituents of the clause may also undergo "fronting", appearing in absolute initial position or following an interclausal conjunction plus clitics. This word order marks some kind of focus or topicalization (or both), but the precise discourse function of pure "fronting" is not yet clear. Fronting is most frequent when a constituent is marked for additive focus by the enclitic /-xa/ "also; even" or for contrastive focus by the enclitic /-ba/.

Agreement within noun phrases is regular (see Bauer 2014). Collective plural subjects take a singular verb, and in the case of multiple subjects the verb is often singular, agreeing with the nearer subject, as does any predicate adjective.

The use of nominal cases and verbal categories mostly follows expected patterns, but the complex interplay of genitive case and relational adjective in marking possession is noteworthy (see Melchert 2003a, 202 with references).

All previous descriptions of relative clause syntax in Luwian must be radically revised (Melchert 2016).

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FURTHER READING

Plöchl (2003) and Payne (2014) offer excellent introductions to Empire/Iron Age Luwian. The latter is in lesson format and includes an introduction to the script. For Kizzuwatna Luwian see Melchert (2003a) and Yakubovich (2015b), but the former must be used with the correctives given here and by Yakubovich.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Ugaritic

Robert Hawley

Introduction

Ugaritic is the name applied by modern scholars to the literary, administrative, and vernacular Semitic language of the ancient city of Ugarit on the Mediterranean coast of Syria, as used and set down in writing by the royal scribes at the end of the Bronze Age.[1]

On the basis of certain lexical and morphological features, it is clear that, within the Semitic language family, Ugaritic belongs to the large and diverse "West Semitic" branch, closely related not only to the "Northwest Semitic languages" but also to Arabic. In fact, Ugaritic is the earliest known West Semitic language for which a sizable corpus of religious poetry, or indeed any scholarly literature, has been preserved.

In antiquity, the city of Ugarit served as the capital of the surrounding homonymous kingdom, of which the surface area was probably roughly comparable to that of the modern administrative province (*muḥāfaẓa*) of Latakia (van Soldt 2005). The ruins of Ugarit itself are located on the tell of Ras Shamra, some ten kilometers north of the modern port city of Latakia, where, since 1929 and up until the present day, French, then Syro-French, and subsequently (since 2011) Syrian archeological excavations conducted on the site (Yon 2006; Al-Bahloul 2016, Matoïan 2016) provide evidence for a long history of occupation from the Neolithic (8th millennium BCE) through the end of the Bronze Age (end of the second millennium BCE). It is above all this final period of the city's (and kingdom's) history that is best known: the Late Bronze Age levels (especially fourteenth to twelfth centuries BCE) have furnished an abundant documentation, not only epigraphic, but also architectural and archaeological.

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Textual Evidence

The epigraphic corpus from Ugarit consists of roughly five thousand objects, mostly inscribed in some form of cuneiform writing, although only a portion of these, slightly under half, is actually in Ugaritic. Relatively modest in size in comparison with other sites such as Ḫattuša or Ebla, such an epigraphic corpus is nevertheless of considerable importance, since it is multigraphic and multilingual (attesting a variety of scripts and languages, most especially those in the local vernacular language and those in Akkadian), and since it provides direct witness to one of the richest and most diverse manifestations of the indigenous scribal and intellectual traditions of the Levant yet known prior to the Hellenistic period. To a certain degree, this diversity is a function of the cosmopolitan character of Ugaritian society, no doubt reinforced by the city's position as a "cultural crossroads" in the Eastern Mediterranean. From the perspective of the history of writing, one interesting aspect of the Ugaritic corpus is its apparently pioneering use of alphabetic technology at the institutional level, with royal and state sponsorship, not only for administrative purposes but also and especially for the creation of a distinctively Levantine literary and cultural repertoire, especially rich in religious literature.

The Cuneiform Alphabets of Ugarit

The vast majority of the alphabetic corpus was written on clay tablets using a locally developed thirty-sign cuneiform alphabetic writing system, although at least two other cuneiform alphabets were known and perhaps even used locally. Indeed, there is reason to suspect a period of early local experimentation with the shorter, twenty-two sign alphabet (which was to enjoy considerable success later, in the early first millennium Levant and elsewhere), prior to the abandonment of this shorter inventory in favor of a longer one, presumably better adapted to local phonology.

At least in its early stages, the "classic" thirty-sign cuneiform alphabet was used for redacting texts not only in the local language, Ugaritic, but also in Akkadian and in Hurrian. The two latter cases appear also to represent innovative experiments that were eventually abandoned; in the first case, however, the alphabet "caught on" and was eventually institutionalized as a graphic vehicle for (among other things) the administration of the kingdom's administrative resources and the redaction of local vernacular religious and scholarly technical literature.

The Ugaritic Corpus

The corpus of texts specifically written in the Ugaritic language, as presently known, numbers over two thousand items, although the pertinence of this number is mitigated by the variable size and volume of preserved text on individual tablets and fragments. Most of the Ugaritic texts were found in excavations at Ras Shamra, though a sizable but significantly smaller corpus (less than one hundred items) comes from excavations at neighboring Ras ibn Hani (Bounni, Lagarce, and Lagarce 1998). A certain number of texts were removed

illicitly, subsequently sold on the antiquities market, and thence made their way into various collections (the so-called "Varia" in Bordreuil and Pardee 1989, 378–382). Finally, a few texts, recovered in excavations from other sites (both inside and outside the kingdom of Ugarit), and written in one of the cuneiform alphabets, may be usefully compared with the Ugaritic corpus (Bordreuil 2012); indeed, the language of some of these may be closely related to Ugaritic.

A global consideration of the morphology of the Ugaritic corpus allows one to distinguish the *mass* of often quite banal documents reflecting the concerns of daily life, including the mundane administration of the palatial (about 1000 texts) and cultic (about 100 texts) economies, epistolary (about 100) and juridical (about 30) documents, from the more *limited number* of school exercises, myths and songs, prayers and liturgies, medical recipes, and technical manuals. This latter category, taken as a whole, might be said to represent an attempt to codify "local knowledge and lore" in writing. Moreover, since there is no known precedent for such a corpus of West Semitic literary and technical writings in an alphabetic script, their very existence suggests that they were the result of a deliberate attempt to create and transmit a written cultural, religious, and literary repertoire.

Although still the subject of some debate, the bulk of the Ugaritic textual corpus was set down in writing over the course of several decades between the mid-thirteenth and the beginning of the twelfth century BCE. Ugaritic documents that allude to fourteenth century events or personages are thus probably later copies.

Language Contact

An Eastern Mediterranean Geographical Context

Ugarit was a coastal Mediterranean kingdom, and numerous aspects of such a climatic and geographical setting impacted the kingdom's economic history (Yon 2006, 9–14). The available resources – not only those resulting from agricultural production and the exploitation of other natural resources (such as timber and minerals from the mountains to the north and east), but also the flourishing local industries and abundant manufactured goods (olive oil, wine, textiles, various other specialized crafts) – lent the Late Bronze kingdom of Ugarit considerable prosperity, and led to sustained and intense trade and diplomatic contacts with surrounding polities and regions, both by land and sea (Monroe 2009). Funneled through the metropolitan capital with its nearby port, these contacts had a profound impact on the political and cultural history of the entire kingdom.

Along with and in addition to such geographical and economic factors, it is also helpful and necessary, in order better to understand and contextualize certain aspects of Ugaritic language, literature and lexicon, to highlight several points of historical, cultural and linguistic contact with neighboring civilizations, contacts which over the course of the second millennium BCE profoundly but variously affected the character of the local language and literary culture. These may be conveniently presented in (more or less) chronological order.

Ugaritic and Amorite

"Amorite" is a convenient cover term for the various West Semitic languages and dialects of the Bronze Age. Ugaritic, too, may be usefully characterized as a Late Bronze example of the Amorite dialect continuum. In any case, while the "Amorite" cultural roots of 13th century Ugaritian society are obvious in the royal onomastic tradition (venerable "Amorite" royal names such as Niqmaddu, Niqmêpaʿ and ʿAmmurapiʾ, etc., are frequent in the local dynasty), many other aspects of the language are also best explained and understood as examples of linguistic inheritances from an earlier Bronze Age West Semitic ancestor. The Ugaritic phonological inventory is one such example, being very conservative (especially as compared with those of the Canaanite and Aramaic languages of the Iron Age). Ugaritic morphology is also conservative, as shown by the preservation of a productive case system, another inheritance from early Semitic. Finally, and perhaps most importantly statistically, the Ugaritic lexicon has retained a great many words inherited from early West Semitic, such as *mhr* "warrior", *àhl* "tent" and *àlp* "ox", to cite just a few examples.

Ugaritic and Babylonian

Beyond such historical contact with earlier West Semitic, the most significant (and most perceptible) type of language contact pertinent for the study of Ugaritic was with the (non West Semitic) regional languages of international politics, cultural prestige and diplomacy. Of these, the most significant, in terms of sustained contact over an extended period, was certainly Babylonian (Vita 2015, 382–387).

The Babylonian language, along with its graphic counterpart, the prestigious Mesopotamian cuneiform writing system, constituted a heavily used international diplomatic *koiné* of the Late Bronze Mediterranean world. As such, that Ugaritic should be heavily influenced by the prestigious languages and scribal traditions of Babylonia is all the more to be expected. Babylonian influence on Ugaritic may be perceived on several levels: graphic, lexical and syntactic.

On the graphic level, the most obvious trace of Babylonian influence is the use of wedge-shaped characters on clay as the principle medium for writing, but such influence probably also extends to the forms themselves of certain signs. Even though many of the Ugaritic alphabetic signs seem to be adaptions to cuneiform of recognizable linear prototypes (the signs {g} and {h}, for example, show clear affinities with their linear counterparts), nevertheless other alphabetic signs seem to have passed through a kind of "Mesopotamianizing" visual filter. In other words, the local scribes' knowledge of the Mesopotamian cuneiform syllabary seems to have influenced the final form of certain alphabetic signs.

The use of Babylonian as a diplomatic international *koiné* also resulted in the adoption of a number of loanwords into the Ugaritic lexicon (Kogan 2015, 350–369). Some of these loanwords even found their way into the literary register of local poetry; indeed, many of the guests attending royal banquets (during which the poems were plausibly sung) would no doubt have been quite familiar with many terms from diplomatic court jargon, such as *md* "friend" (< Akk. *mūdû*), *pḫr* "assembly" (< Akk. *puḫru*), and *trḫt* "bride price" (< Akk. *terḫatu*).

Finally, since the Ugaritic scribal tradition probably only took shape in the mid-thirteenth century (Hawley, Pardee and Roche-Hawley 2016), the numerous syntactic similarities

observable among epistolary and juridical formulas in Ugaritic and locally composed Akkadian texts, for example, are probably best explained as calques based on earlier Levantine scribal traditions using the Babylonian international *koiné* (Huehnergard 2012, 82).

Over and above "Babylonian" influence, however, it is also necessary to evoke the possibility of Assyrian influence (van Soldt 2001, 2002). Indeed, it is to be expected that the dramatic rise of Assyrian military power in the second half of the 13th century naturally had lasting percussions throughout the Hittite empire, including for the kingdom of Ugarit on the Mediterranean coast (Arnaud 2003; Vita 2005, 91–95). Not only does some of the Mesopotamian scholarly literature copied or simply archived in the various libraries of Ugarit show signs of their models having passed through Assyrian *scriptoria* (Arnaud 2007, 9–11), but some of the compositions themselves are Assyrian (even if redacted mostly in Babylonian), such as the nascent *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic* (ibid., 120–123). "Assyrianizing" signs and grammatical forms are also perceptible elsewhere in the Ras Shamra Akkadian corpus, but since such "Assyrianisms" are pervasive also in other peripheral corpora (notably Sidon; Arnaud 2001, 291–322), it is difficult to determine whether such features result from the actual presence of Assyrian scribes, or merely show that, far from Mesopotamia, the written Akkadian employed by Levantine scribes was subject to multiple and various influences (including corruptions). In any case, the presence of a (small) number of Akkadian names in the Ugaritian onomasticon is perhaps a manifestation of the local reverence for all things Mesopotamian; as elsewhere in the Hittite empire, at least some Ugaritians apparently took on Mesopotamian *noms de plume* in homage of such heritage. One such case in point was the local scribe *Nalḫiš-šalmu*, who bears a good Babylonian name (Stamm 1939, 160–161): the texts produced by him and his students show a curious mixture of Babylonian, Assyrian and local West Semitic features.

Ugaritic and Hurrian

If contacts with Babylonian language and culture, surveyed above, were somewhat superficial and indirect, being limited to the preoccupations and activities of the local literary and diplomatic elites, linguistic and cultural contacts with the Hurrian world (Giorgieri 2013; Lam 2015) were by stark contrast of a much more widespread and deep-rooted nature. Like much of southeastern Anatolia and northern Syro-Mesopotamia, the kingdom of Ugarit was part of the Mittannian empire for a few hundred years (sixteenth to fourteenth centuries BCE), and owing to this legacy, Hurrian influence is almost ubiquitous in the Ugaritic corpus.

This influence is apparent not only in the local literary and scholarly traditions (polyglot lexical lists, proverbs, common motifs in lyric poetry, etc.), some of which (including certain "Babylonian" scholarly texts and scribal traditions, mentioned above) must have been transmitted to Ugarit through the intermediary of the Mittannian chancellery, but also and especially in the documents reflecting the mundane realities of daily life.

Hurrian influence is obvious behind several local month names, for example, and a great many local rites and festivals involved liturgies in which (sometimes long) passages were recited out loud in Hurrian by local priests. Indeed, many of the divinities honored in the local temples were Hurrian in origin. Furthermore, a large percentage of the local population bore Hurrian names; and even the names of fictional characters in Ugaritic lyric poetry are sometimes Hurrian (Kirta, for example). Finally, the Ugaritic lexicon contained

a significant number of loanwords from Hurrian for various social, economic, technical, political or juridical concepts retained from earlier eras (Watson 2007, 124–135): cf. institutional social realities, such as the *ỉnṯ*-service obligation (prob. < Hurrian *un=o/u=šše*), or professional technical specialists, such as the *prln* "diviner" (prob. < Hurrian *fur=o/ull=i=nni*). Such considerations have led some scholars to suggest the possibility that Hurrian was still productively spoken (at least in certain sectors of society) in thirteenth century Ugarit, but it is also possible that all of these features are vestigial fossils from an earlier period, much like the use of Latin in various but highly circumscribed aspects of European societies of the early modern period (as in Roman Catholic liturgy, legal technical terms, certain scholarly publications, etc.).

Ugaritic and Egyptian

As elsewhere on the Levantine coast, the royal family and other elites in the kingdom of Ugarit were deeply impressed by the prestige of Pharaonic Egypt and its material civilization, a cultural influence that was already ancient by the time of the Late Bronze Age. Traces of such local appreciation for Egyptian culture are most visible in the artifactual and iconographic sources, of course, but one also finds plausible examples of linguistic influence (that is, the influence of Egyptian on local Ugaritic), especially in the form of loanwords and certain formulaic expressions (Lagarce 2013). Within the loanword category (Watson 2007, 135–145), many of the examples usually cited are debated, but among the more convincing proposals is an Egyptian origin for the precative particle *mʿ* and the exclamatory particle *mk* in Ugaritic, both of which were used extensively (and attested only) in the poems copied by the scribe Ilimilku, who seems to have been prone to a "propensity to use foreign words, as many a learned person does to show off a little" (as Marjo Korpel once famously put it). Egyptian loanwords in Ugaritic were not limited to such literary affections, however, but also extend, as one would expect, to the vocabulary of material culture, and especially in those semantic fields where Egyptian expertise was locally appreciated. A small percentage of the personal names in the Ugaritic onomasticon are Egyptian in origin.

Ugaritic and Hittite

A major (political but also cultural) break with previous traditions at Ugarit was marked by the advent of the Hittite imperial period, beginning in the mid-fourteenth century, and lasting until the destruction of the city in the early twelfth century. Hittite imperial influence was both indirect but also and especially direct, manifest through the frequent and lasting presence in the city of various high-ranking Hittite officers, diplomats and other functionaries (whose digraphic seals have been found in excavations). The use of Babylonian for official documents (see above) explains, though only in part, the paucity of actual Hittite texts found at Ras Shamra. Given the regular presence of such foreign dignitaries at court, and indeed, the fact that several of the queens of Ugarit were themselves members of the Hittite royal family (daughters or grand-daughters of the great king, for example), it is perhaps unsurprising that the lyric poetry sung by local poets and bards contained a number of Hittite loanwords, perhaps even neologisms (Watson 2007, 118–124). Finally, the Ugaritic corpus contains a small percentage of personal names of Anatolian (Hittite, Luwian, etc.) origin.

Ugaritic and Other Contemporary West Semitic Languages

In addition to its Amorite heritage (see above), Ugaritic was also in regular and prolonged contact with several other contemporary West Semitic dialects and languages, of which some have left traces in the Ugaritic corpus. The various gentilics found in the administrative texts suggest that these included the languages of the ports of "Phoenicia" (Tyre seems to have been especially prominent), but also with inland Syrian centers such as Emar, and southern "Canaanite" polities such as Ashdod and Akko, to cite but a few. Such "inner-West-Semitic" contact is also perceivable in the local onomasticon, where the attested form differs from what is otherwise known about Ugaritic morphology. Examples include the syllabic writings of personal names such as *Munaḫḫimu* (had the name been Ugaritic, one would have expected *Manaḫḫimu*), and *ʾAdôn-i-Baʿlu* (written ^{m}*a-du-ni-*^{d}10; had the name been Ugaritic, one would have expected ^{m}*a-da-ni-*). Even on the lexical level, unusual forms such as *btm* instead of expected *bhtm* for the plural form of "house" may well be due to interference from another West Semitic language in which the regular plural form was *batūma* (for example), and not *bahatūma* (as, presumably, in standard Ugaritic). By and large, however, recognizable and convincing examples of such "inner-West-Semitic" contacts are few and far between.

Sketch of Ugaritic Grammar

The major phonological and morphological features of Ugaritic are about as well understood as such things can be, given the limited nature and extent of the available data.[2] After a concise overview of Ugaritic phonology and morphology, a few remarks follow on syntax and lexicon.

Ugaritic Phonology

Consonants

Thanks to the essentially contrastive nature of the thirty-sign "standard Ugaritic" cuneiform alphabet on the one hand, and the presence of a sizeable corpus of inherited Semitic vocabulary in the Ugaritic lexicon on the other, the etymological reconstruction of the inventory of Ugaritic consonantal phonemes is fairly straightforward (Table 14.1). What remains difficult, and in some cases perhaps even insoluble, is the identification of the specific phonetic shape of some or all of the (conditioned or unconditioned) reflexes of these etymological phonemes in spoken Ugaritic.

As in many other Semitic languages, for certain series of obstruents (not only stops and fricatives, but also affricates, if such still existed), the Ugaritic phonemic inventory possessed a tripartite series of contrastive articulations: voiced, voiceless and the so-called "emphatic" (perhaps ejective?). The reconstruction of some series is clearer than for others, since the various categories of data, both internal and comparative, are not equally harmonious. Stops, approximants and nasals, for example, all seem to have been fairly

Table 14.1 Ugaritic consonants (traditional transcription in italics, hypothetical IPA values in brackets).

	Bilabial	*Interdental*	*Dental*	*Alveloar*	*Lateral*	*Palatal*	*Velar*	*Pharyngal*	*Glottal*
Stops	*p*		*t*				*k*		*ʾ* [ʔ]
Voiceless									
Voiced	*b*		*d*				*g*		
"Emphatic"			*ṭ* [tˀ]				*q* [kˀ]		
Fricatives		*ṯ* [θ]		*š* [sˀ][3]	*l*		*ḫ* [x]	*ḥ* [ħ]	*h*
Voiceless									
Voiced		*ḏ* [ð]					*ġ* [ɣ]	*ʿ* [ʕ]	
"Emphatic"		*ẓ* [θˀ]							
Affricates				*ṣ* [ʦˀ]					
Voiceless									
Voiced				*z* [ʣˀ]					
"Emphatic"				*ṣ* [ʦˀ]					
Approximants	*w*			*r*		*y*			
Nasals	*m*		*n*						

Table 14.2 The Proto-Semitic lateral series, and their presumed reflexes in Ugaritic.

Proto-Semitic (hypothetical)		*phonemic reflex (hypothetical)*	*Ug. traditional transcription*
*ɬ	→	[l]	*l*
*ɬ́	merged with	[$s^{ʲ}$]	*š*
*ɬ’	merged with	[$ʦ^{ʼʲ}$]	*ṣ*

Table 14.3 Ugaritic etymological vowels, inherited from Proto-Semitic.

	front	*back*
high	i, ī	u, ū
low	a, ā	

stable in Ugaritic, judging from the relative consistency of their representation in the locally used alphabetic and syllabic scripts, and from their stability in other West Semitic languages. With the notable exception of the laterals, the fricatives also appear to have been fairly stable.

The Proto-Semitic laterals are the only reconstructed series which appears not to have been stable diachronically; it did not survive as such in Ugaritic, but instead two of the three PS laterals (the voiceless and “emphatic”) had merged in proto-Ugaritic with adjacent alveolar phonemes (Table 14.2).

Vowels

The Ugaritic vowel system can be plausibly reconstructed from a confrontation of two sources: the existence of three quasi-syllabic graphemes representing consonantal *’alif* and a following vowel (including “zero”-vowel), and the corpus of Ugaritic words written with the Mesopotamian cuneiform syllabary. Thus reconstructed, the Ugaritic vocalic inventory appears to be remarkably conservative, and quite similar to classical Arabic and old Akkadian (and, to a lesser extent, old Babylonian) in that Ugaritic also preserves the Proto-Semitic three-quality, two-quantity system (Table 14.3).

Vocalic length was almost certainly phonemic: minimal pairs such as *taktubu* “you write” and *taktubū* “would that you all write!”, for example, would have been discernibly contrastive for native speakers.

When immediately followed by etymological *y* or *w* in syllable-final position, Ugaritic short *a* developed two conditioned allophones: the diphthongs *ay* and *aw* resolved to *ê* (< **ay*) and *ô* (< **aw*) respectively.

Ugaritic Morphology

As with phonology, what can be known about Ugaritic morphology must be reconstructed from two unequal but complementary sources of direct evidence: the distribution of the three *ʾalif* signs, which provides only a limited amount of information, and the analysis of the fairly consequent corpus of Ugaritic words written in Mesopotamian syllabic script,

from which a great deal of information can be gleaned (Huehnergard 2008). These suggestive data may then be further fleshed out, organized and harmonized on the basis of comparative (and thus indirect) evidence.

Given the conservatism already observed in regard to the phonological system, it is perhaps not surprising that Ugaritic morphology is also conservative. Indeed, a surprising number of the morphological features of nouns, verbs, and particles, as reconstructed for Proto-Semitic, show up more or less as such (or in recognizably similar form) in Ugaritic.

It is useful to distinguish three related but distinct systems in discussing Ugaritic morphology: nominal, verbal and particular.

Nominal Morphology

Ugaritic nominal morphology may be usefully characterized as a two-element sequence: a "nominal base", followed by a "grammatical suffix" (in that order).

Nominal Bases

The nominal base, in turn, may also be separated into two constituent elements: a consonantal root conveying basic semantics, and a vowel sequence or noun pattern, refining, specifying or otherwise nuancing the basic semantics of the consonantal root. These two elements, however, are not sequential, but instead combine through Ablaut.

Furthermore, a nominal base may be augmented by prefixes or suffixes, or both. Prefixes include *ʾv-*, *tv-*, and *mv-* (where *v* is "any vowel"). Often, bases with the *tv-* prefix have abstract semantics (cf. *tgmr*, "total"), while those with the *mv-* prefix refer to concrete entities (cf. *mgdl*, "tower"), but these are merely tendencies, and many exceptions exist. Suffixes commonly appended to nominal bases (not to be confused with the "grammatical suffixes" on which see below) include *-ūt* and *-ān*, the former occasionally found on abstract nouns (cf. probably *ḥyt*, "life"), and the latter on adjectives (as is *ảbyn*, "poor"), but again, such tendencies are not absolute. Some nominal bases combine prefixes and suffixes, as in *ảlỉyn*, "most powerful", *mỉšmn* "seal", *tpdt* "liberation" and *tmtt* "shipwreck".

Generally, the nominal base in Ugaritic is unchanging (that is, the same base is used for the singular and the plural, for example). There are, however, surviving traces of an earlier stage of Semitic, in which the singular was distinguished from the plural not by suffixes appended sequentially to the base, but instead by Ablaut (cf. in English "goose" versus "geese"). The alphabetic and syllabic data both suggest that such traces were restricted to nouns of the QvTL pattern, some (but not all!) of which still possessed bi-syllabic bases for the plural form; thus, for example, *raʾšu* "head" (with a QaTL- pattern) but *raʾašātu* "heads" (with the QaTaL pattern).

Grammatical Suffixes

The grammatical suffixes which follow the nominal base are more limited in number, and more rigorously associated with the expression of the semantic/syntactic notions of number, gender, grammatical case, and state.

Ugaritic has three productive numbers (singular, dual and plural), distinguished by vowel length (short vowels mark the singular, long vowels the dual and the plural) or by quality (*-ū-*

and *-ī-* for the plural, *-ā-* and *-ê-* for the dual); and two grammatical genders: "masculine" (often unmarked), and "feminine" (often though not always marked by the presence of the "feminine" morpheme *-(v)t-*). Like Akkadian and Arabic, Ugaritic also distinguishes three different grammatical cases for singular nouns, distinguishing the roles of subject, verbal complement and nominal complement (here called "nominative", "accusative" and "genitive" respectively), and two for dual and plural nouns, distinguishing subject from (both verbal and nominal) complement (here called "nominative" and "oblique", respectively).

In terms of morpho-syntax, for the dual and plural (but only them), nouns which are "bound" to a following genitive (including pronominal suffixes functioning as such) are usually distinguished morphologically from those which are not so "bound": these two grammatical "states" are also called "construct" and "absolute", respectively. Table 14.4 illustrates how these disparate categories combine to form the distinctive grammatical suffixes generally reconstructed for Ugaritic.

The Ugaritic corpus also presents a number of nominal forms which appear to show "extra-nominal" enclitic particles. One such example is the adverbial particle *-h*, often expressing direction, as in *šmmh* "toward the heavens"; another is the multiplicative particle *-ỉd*, as in *ṯlṯỉd* "three times". Unlike other enclitic particles, these two particles are always "extra-nominal", that is, attested on nouns, but owing to their sequential placement it is necessary to distinguish them conceptually from the "cases" described above.

Table 14.4 The Ugaritic nominal inflection.

Nouns in the syntactically "unbound" or "absolute" state:			
	nominative	accusative	genitive
singular			
masc.	base=u	base=a	base=u
fem.	base=(a)tu	base=(a)ta	base=(a)ti
dual			
	nominative	(oblique)	
masc.	base=āma	base=êma	
fem.	base=(a)tāma	base=(a)têma	
plural			
	nominative	(oblique)	
masc.	base=ūma	base=īma	
fem.	base=ātu	base=āti	
Nouns in the syntactically "bound" or "construct" state (where different from above):			
singular	(same as unbound)		
dual			
	nominative	(oblique)	
masc.	base=ā	base=ê	
fem.	base=(a)tā	base=(a)tê	
plural			
	nominative	(oblique)	
masc.	base=ū	base=ī	
fem.	(same as unbound)		

Verbal Morphology

As with nouns, Ugaritic verbal morphology may be characterized as a combination of two elements: a "verbal base" (consonantal root and a vowel pattern), and a set of "grammatical affixes".

Unlike nouns, however, and owing largely to the prehistory of the West Semitic verbal system, the grammatical information conveyed by these affixes is not always presented in the form of a suffix positioned sequentially after the verbal base, but is instead variously distributed according to a combination of (mostly) suffixes and (only occasionally) prefixes.

Verbal morphology differs from nominal not only in terms of the position of the grammatical affixes, but also in regard to the information conveyed by these latter. The grammatical categories of case and state, for example, inappropriate for verbs, have no bearing on verbal morphology. One does, however, encounter in all verbs the systematic morphological marking of the gender (masculine, feminine) and number (singular, dual, plural) of the verb's grammatical subject. Additionally, Ugaritic verbs also consistently distinguish three categories of "person" for this same grammatical subject: first, second and third.

As in other Northwest Semitic languages and in Arabic, Ugaritic possessed two historically different verbal conjugations, each having inherited its own specific morphological characteristics. These may be labelled descriptively as the "suffixing conjugation" (or SC), and the "prefixing conjugation" (or PC). One may note that, while the grammatical affixes of the SC are always suffixes, those of the PC are a combination of both prefixes and suffixes. The SC is, in some sense, the "younger" of the two (and, as such, is less complex morphologically), and will be presented first.

The Suffixing Conjugation

The Proto-Central-Semitic suffixing conjugation (SC) evolved historically from the early Semitic "stative" conjugation. Although several "stative" examples have survived in thirteenth century usage, by and large, the Ugaritic SC served as a tense, marking action having occurred in the past, though several other minor usages have been identified (many require further study). Table 14.5 shows the Ugaritic SC as generally reconstructed.

The Prefixing Conjugation

The greater antiquity of the Semitic PC led to its having not only greater morphological complexity, but also a much broader range of semantic functions than the SC. The so-called "indicative mood" of the PC is presented first, followed by the jussive and other moods. Since the imperative also seems to depend formally on the PC, it too will be surveyed in this section.

The Indicative Paradigm

The indicative mood (Table 14.6) is used especially for marking present or future action, as a "narrative tense" in lyric poetry (the so-called "historical present"), and for various and sundry modal and aspectual nuances.

Table 14.5 The Ugaritic suffixing conjugation.

singular	
3ms	base=a
3fs	base=at
2ms	base=(ā)ta
2fs	base=(ā)ti
1cs	base=(ā)tu
dual	
3md	base=ā
3fd	base=(a)tā
2md	base=(ā)tumā
1cd	base=(ā)nayā (ʔ)
plural	
3mp	base=ū
3fp	base=ā (ʔ)
2mp	base=(ā)tumu
2fp	base=(ā)tina
1cp	base=(ā)nu (ʔ)

Table 14.6 Ugaritic PC (indicative).

singular	
3ms	y=base=u
3fs	t=base=u
2ms	t=base=u
2fs	t=base=īna
1cp	ʾ=base=u
dual	
3md	t=base=āna[4]
3fd	t=base=āna
2md	t=base=āna
1cd	n=base=āna
plural	
3mp	t=base=ūna[5]
3fp	t=base=na
2mp	t=base=ūna
2fp	t=base=na
1cp	n=base=u

The Jussive and Other Volitionals

A speaker's volition was expressed through other grammatical moods, of which the most common is the so-called "jussive" (Table 14.7), which was marked either through a "zero" final mood vowel (for those forms which have final *-u* in the indicative) or by dropping the final post-vocalic indicative *-na* (for those forms which have such in the indicative).

Table 14.7 Ugaritic PC (jussive).

singular	
3ms	y=base=∅
3fs	t=base=∅
2ms	t=base=∅
2fs	t=base=ī
1cs	ʾ=base=∅
dual	
3md	t=base=ā[7]
3fd	t=base=ā
2md	t=base=ā
1cd	n=base=ā
plural	
3mp	t=base=ū[8]
3fp	t=base=na
2mp	t=base=ū
2fp	t=base=na
1cp	n=base=∅

Table 14.8 Ugaritic PC (volitive forms in *-a*).

singular	
3ms	y=base=a
3fs	t=base=a
2ms	t=base=a
1cs	ʾ=base=a
plural	
1cp	n=base=a

However, since this same form was used, historically, also to express past action (cf. the so-called "preterite" in Akkadian), there has been some debate about whether or not the Ugaritic poetic corpus contains some (vestigial or intentionally archaizing) examples of such frozen archaic preterites. The data are not easy to digest, but it appears best to admit the possibility that some "Ugaritic poets knew the archaic dialect and played on the forms 'stylistically'" (Pardee 2003-2004, 341), through the artful use of occasional historical preterites alongside the more current indicative forms, during the singing of narrative poetry.[6]

In addition to the jussive (YQTL+Ø), there are also clear traces in Ugaritic of the preservation of a third grammatical mood used with the PC, marked by the mood vowel *-a* (Tropper 2012, 455–457), and used (like the jussive) to express volition (thus formally comparable to the so-called "cohortative" in grammars of biblical Hebrew, though not limited to the 1st person). This paradigm (Table 14.8) was apparently only partial.

The Imperative

As elsewhere in Semitic, the imperative (Table 14.9) exists only for the 2nd person; gender and number are marked exclusively through suffixes, but these suffixes show an affinity with those found elsewhere for the PC.

Table 14.9 The Ugaritic imperative.

singular	
2ms	base=∅ *and* base=a
2fs	base=ī
dual	
2cd	base=ā
plural	
2mp	base=ū
2fp	base=na

Verbal Adjectives, Verbal Nouns

Even though infinitives and participles are constructed according to the principles of nominal (and not verbal) morphology, they may nevertheless be briefly mentioned here, since they share certain features with verbs (such as occasionally having an accusative complement), but they are not overtly marked for person in the same way conjugated verbs are.

The infinitive is a verbal noun; its nominal base is largely a function of verbal stem (see below). Participles are verbal adjectives, and like all adjectives they may be substantivized. Like verbal nouns, their nominal base is largely a function of the verbal stem to which they belong, with the additional proviso that verbs of active, transitive meaning possess not one but two morphologically distinguished participial forms, one active and the other passive.

Verbal Stems

As with nouns, the morphological structure of the verbal bases in Ugaritic also varied, but in a much more circumscribed (and thus more predictable) way, essentially as a function of the specific verbal stem used for expressing a given meaning. Four such principle stems may be distinguished for Ugaritic, traditionally abbreviated G, D, Š, and N, each being loosely characterized by a set of associated semantics. G-stem nouns show the most semantic variation, ranging from stative, intransitive verbs to active, transitive ones. D-stem verbs are transitive (sometimes doubly so), and their meaning often corresponds to factitive or intensive variations of the G-stem meaning (where both exist). Š-stem verbs are also transitive (even doubly so); their meaning is often causative. Finally, the N-stem is used for referring to action without reference to agent (the grammatical subject of N-stem verbs is the patient of the action, and such verbs are thus often translated into English as passives, reflexives, etc.).

Table 14.10 presents plausible verbal bases for the various conjugations and other verbal forms in each of the principle stems. The three active stems (G, D, Š) also possessed internal passives; proposals for these are given in Table 14.11.

Agentless action could be expressed in Ugaritic not only with the N-stem and the internal passives, but also with a series of derived stems containing a *-ta-* infix. Often these stems have semantics that are reflexive or reciprocal, sometimes simply passive, but in virtually all cases agentless (Table 14.12).

All of these patterns show allomorphs for certain root types, and especially for "weak" roots.

In addition to the system of verbal stems, Ugaritic also possessed two quasi-verbal existential predicators (one positive, one negative): *ỉṯ* and *ỉn*. There are some signs that these were

Table 14.10 Verbal bases of the principle stems.

	SC	*PC*	*imperative*	*participle*	*infinitive*
G	QaTaL- QaTiL- QaTuL-	-aQTuL- -iQTaL- -aQTiL-	QuTuL- QaTaL- QiTiL-	QāTiL-	(often) QaTāL-
D	QaTTiL-	-aQaTTiL-	QaTTiL-	maQaTTiL-	QuTTāL-
Š	šaQTiL-	-ašaQTiL-	šaQTiL-	mašaQTiL-	šaQTāL-
N	naQTaL-	-iQQaTiL-	ʾiQQaTiL-	naQTaL-	naQTāL-

Table 14.11 Verbal bases for stems with an internal passive (hypothetical).

	SC	*PC*	*participles*
Gp	QuTiL- (ʔ)	-uQTaL-	QaTūL-
Dp	QuTTiL- (ʔ)	-aQuTTaL- (ʔ)	maQuTTaL- (ʔ)
Šp	šuQTiL-(ʔ)	-ašuQTaL- (ʔ)	mašuQTaL- (ʔ)

Table 14.12 Verbal bases for the stems with the infix *-ta-*.

	SC	*PC*	*imperative*	*participle*	*infinitive*
Gt	ʾiQtaTiL-	-iQtaTiL-	ʾiQtaTiL-	miQtaTiL- (ʔ)	ʾiQtaTāL- (ʔ)
tD	taQaTTaL-	-ataQaTTaL- (ʔ)	taQaTTaL-	mataQaTTaL- (ʔ)	tuQaTTāL- (ʔ)
Št	ʾištaQTiL-	-ištaQTiL-		mištaQTiL-	šaQtaTāL-

in the process of being integrated more productively into the verbal system (that is, marked for person), as shown by the apparently conjugated form *ỉtt*, "I am/was to be found".

Particular Morphology

Unlike the morphology of nouns and verbs, in which Ablaut plays a major role, the morphology particles in Ugaritic is above all sequential. As such, pronouns are treated here (since their morphological structure is not characterized by ablaut), but Ugaritic contains several other types of particles.

Pronouns

The pronominal system of Ugaritic is very conservative, in some respects probably not far removed from the Proto-West-Semitic system. Ugaritic possessed pronouns of several types: personal, impersonal, indefinite, interrogative and relative, for example.

Personal Pronouns

Personal pronouns show both independent and suffixed forms; both were to a certain extent marked for grammatical case. The independent paradigm distinguishes nominative forms (Table 14.13) from non-nominative ("oblique") ones (Table 14.14).

Table 14.13 Ugaritic independent pronouns (nominative forms).

	vocalization (often hypothetical)	*writing*
singular		
3ms	***huwa***	hw
3fs	*hiya*	hy
2ms	***ʾatta***	åt
2fs	*ʾatti*	åt
1cs	***ʾanāku***	ånk
and	*ʾanā*	ån
dual		
3cd	*humā*	hm
2cd	*ʾattumā*	åtm
plural		
3mp	*humu*	*hm*
3fp	*hina*	*hn*
2mp	*ʾattumu*	åtm
2fp	*ʾattina*	*åtn*
1cp	*ʾanaḥnu*	*ånḥn*

Table 14.14 Ugaritic independent pronouns (oblique forms).

	vocalization (often hypothetical)	*writing*
singular		
3ms	*huwati*	hwt
3fs	*hiyati*	hyt
dual		
3cd	*humāti*	hmt
plural		
3mp	*humūti*	hmt
3fp	*hināti*	hnt

Suffixed personal pronouns in Ugaritic (Table 14.15) are largely unmarked for case; exceptions include the 3s and 1s forms, which often graphically distinguish a "genitive" (attached to substantives, and used after prepositions) from an "accusative/dative" (attached to conjugated verbs) form.

Relative and Demonstrative Pronouns

In very early (thirdrd millennium) or very conservative (early Arabic) forms of Semitic, the relative pronoun shows a fully declined paradigm which distinguishes not only number and gender, but also case. As in (second millennium) Akkadian and classical Arabic, however, the relative pronoun paradigm in Ugaritic (Table 14.16) had probably become virtually indeclinable. The most common writing is *d*, which may have had the invariable

Table 14.15 Ugaritic suffixed pronouns.

	vocalization (often hypothetical)	*writing*
	gen. form (acc./dat. if diff.)	
singular		
3ms	*-hu* (*-nnu*, etc.)	-h (-n, etc.)
3fs	*-ha* (*-nna*, etc.)	-h (-n, etc.)
2ms	*-ka*	-k
2fs	*-ki*	-k
1cs	*-ya and -î* (*-nî*)	-y and -∅ (-n)
dual		
3cd	*-humā*	-hm
2cd	*-kumā*	-km
1cd	*-nayā ?*	-ny
plural		
3mp	*-humu*	-hm
3fp	*-hina*	-hn
2mp	*-kumu*	-km
2fp	*-kina*	-kn
1cp	*-na ?*	-n

Table 14.16 Forms of the relative pronoun in Ugaritic.

	masculine	*feminine*
singular	*dū* (written *d*)	*dāti* (*dt*), or, less frequently *dū* (*d*)
dual	?	
plural	*dūti* (*dt*), or, less frequently *dū* (*d*)	

vocalic structure *dū* (originally the nominative), used (apparently indeclinably) not only for ms antecedents, but also (less predictably) for f and pl ones.

Other Pronouns

Like other Semitic languages, Ugaritic possessed a rich and diverse set of interrogative pronouns; examples include *ỉk* "how?", *lm* "why?", *mn* "who?", *mh* "what?". Indefinite variants of some of these also existed, some marked by the addition of the particles *-k* or *-m* (see below, clitic particles): *mnk* "whoever"; *mhk* and *mnm*, both "whatever".

Deictic Particles

A large number of deictic and presentative particles are known in Ugaritic; many of these incorporate the historical (near) "deictic" morpheme **han-*: cf. *ht*, *hl*, *hn*, *hln*, *hlm*, *hlny*, all of which could mean something like "here, now!" Far deixis could also be expressed lexically, through similar morphological manifestations of the morpheme **t̲amma-*, "there".

Ugaritic possessed demonstrative adjectives, perhaps (like the relative) indeclinable for case, but still retaining some distinctions for gender and number. The near demonstrative for ms nouns was written *hnd* (indeclinable, *hannadū* ʔ), and this form is also attested (by extension) in association with plural nouns. The 3rd person independent pronouns were used for the far demonstrative: *bnš hw*, "that man". In terms of syntax, these demonstrative adjectives behave like other attributive adjectives, directly following the noun they modify.

Clitic Particles

Ugaritic possessed several clitic particles, both proclitic and postclitic. The distribution of the proclitic particles was syntactically somewhat more strict: negative *l* (*lā*) was used prior to conjugated verbs; the proclitic prepositions, such as *b* (*bi*) "in", *k* (*ka*) "like", and *l* (*lə*), "to", prior to any noun; but subordinating *k* (*kī*) "since, for" prior to any phrase.

Much more variation is found in the inventory and distribution of postclitic particles, of which the precise semantics nuances are also very difficult to define. Common postclitic particles include *-m*, *-n*, *-t*, *-k*, and *-y*.

Syntax

The Case System

The syntactic role played by substantives in Ugaritic sentences is marked by means of the case system (as in Eblaite, Akkadian and classical Arabic). In the singular, three syntactic roles were generally distinguished formally, which we may (perhaps inappropriately, but nevertheless traditionally) call "nominative", "accusative" and "genitive". In the dual, plural, and in singular nouns of certain morphological type, the case system was diptotic, distinguishing only "nominative" and "oblique" cases (the latter refers to a single former category used for marking both "accusative" and "genitive" syntactic roles).

The "nominative" is used either absolutely (that is, in isolation, for example for elements of a list), or to mark the grammatical subject of a verb. The "accusative" is used to mark adverbial complements of all sorts, including especially direct objects of transitive verbs, but also expressions of manner, direction, etc. The "genitive" marks nominal and prepositional complements. "Genitives" appended to verbal nouns can be either "objective" or "subjective" in meaning.

Apposition is frequent, especially (but not only) in poetry, and may involve not only substantives, but also verbs or prepositional phrases.

Sentence Typology and Word Order

Sentences may be either nominal (that is verbless) or verbal. In the former case, the predicate may be a noun, pronoun, (predicate) adjective, adverb or adverbial phrase (a prepositional phrase, for example).

Owing to the diversity of preserved text types, and especially the existence of a sizable corpus of poetry, one must admit that word order in Ugaritic, for both types of sentences, appears to have been surprisingly variable, to such an extent that it is often difficult to distinguish

"unmarked" syntax from "marked". It is furthermore unclear whether prose texts somehow imitate spoken Ugaritic to a greater extent than poetry. "Left dislocation" (fronting for emphasis), for example, is very prominent in the epistolary corpus, and this characteristic may owe more to the habits of chancellery practice than to contemporary speech patterns.

That said, there is some reason to suspect that in nominal sentences the basic, "unmarked" syntactic order was subject – predicate; and in verbal sentences, subject – verb – complement.

Lexicon

The lexicon of the Ugaritic language is only partially known, owing to the limited nature of the textual corpus, and the limited purview of subjects treated in the texts. A fairly abundant amount of information, for example, is available for certain semantic fields, such as the textile and metal industries, and yet very little others, such as the vocabulary for pulses and leaf vegetables. The reason for such uneven coverage appears to be economic: the former were valuable (and thus marketable), while latter were perishable (and thus not marketable), and so not of primary concern for the scribes entrusted with record-keeping.

That said, the preserved textual corpus is significant enough to allow for a global characterization of the Ugaritic lexicon. It is useful, for example, to distinguish inherited from "borrowed" vocabulary.

A very large portion of the Ugaritic lexicon consists of the former: for the basic, banal vocabulary or everyday life (numbers, agricultural and household terms, words for common animals and plants, weather and celestial phenomena), Ugaritic shows extensive overlap with sister and cousin languages in the West Semitic branch. Also in the onomastic corpus (anthroponyms, topnyms, theonyms, etc.), Ugaritic shows a high percentage of inherited elements. "Amorite" names, for example, clearly still retained a certain popularity in 13th century naming practices. Such conservatism is also to be expected for toponyms, theonyms, etc. Within this corpus of inherited vocabulary, however, Ugaritic also show some signs of semantic evolution, drift, or replacement. Notable local peculiarities which show drift include the primary semantics of the word *ảdn* which means "father" (and not "lord") in 13th century Ugaritic, despite its apparent etymology. The local word for "country" was *ḫwt* (and not *ảrṣ* as might, perhaps, have been expected), and the basic verbs of movement included *tlḫ* "he departed" and *mǰy* "he arrived" (whose etymological cognates are less commonly used in related languages). There are also other significant lexical differences with its later cousins: Ugaritic possessed no lexicalized definite article, for example.

On the other hand, and not surprisingly for a cosmopolitan kingdom characterized by such extensive social and cultural contacts (see above, Language contacts), Ugaritic vocabulary also contained a good many elements which entered the lexicon as loan-words, or simply as foreign words (or neologisms). Loanwords of Hurrian origin are rather frequent for local cultic, social and legal institutions, for example, and in the onomasticon (personal names, divine names, month names, etc.). Some loanwords of Akkadian, Hittite, Egyptian and (non-Ugaritic) West Semitic origin are also known (see above, language contacts). Some of these may well have been neologisms, that is, foreign words incorporated spontaneously by the court poets and singers into their songs for prestige-motivated reasons (and which must have pleased the cosmopolitan guests at royal banquets).

Finally, a fairly large number of items in the Ugaritic lexicon are not usefully classified as either Semitic or non-Semitic. Such "wander-words" and "culture-words", whose

precise etymology is often unknown and unknowable include banal words such as *yn* "wine", *brḏl* "iron", *dd* "(large) jar (for dry goods)", *kd* "(small) jar (for liquids)", *ảgn* "cauldron", *ṯrmn* "cypress", *lrmn* "pomegranate", *ḫbn* "ebony", *kmn* "cumin", etc.

NOTES

1 Pedagogical grammars include Bordreuil and Pardee (2009) and Huehnergard (2012). The standard reference grammar is Tropper 2012; the standard lexicon, del Olmo Lete and Sanmartín 2015. Annotated bibliography (dated, since only until 2011) in Hawley 2012.
2 Tropper 2012 and Pardee 2003–2004 should be consulted in tandem.
3 Hutton 2006, 79; less likely is [ʃ].
4 The (historical) prefix *y-* was in the process of being replaced by *t-* as the marker of the 3rd person in the dual and plural of the Ugaritic PC. Several (intentionally archaizing?) forms with *y-* are attested in the poetic corpus (Tropper 2012, 432–441).
5 See the above note.
6 The debate goes on; see, recently, Andrason and Vita 2017.
7 See note 5 above.
8 See note 5 above.

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Ancient Hebrew

Seth Sanders

Introduction

Ancient Hebrew is the best-known early North-West Semitic language, a fact inseparable from its long and close relationship with Western scholarship. This close relationship had the remarkable result of transmitting – in multiple forms – the longest and most linguistically rich document in an ancient Semitic language, the Hebrew Bible (AKA Old Testament, abbreviated *TaNaKh* in Hebrew). It also created interesting problems for linguistic analysis: to gain the fullest picture of ancient Hebrew requires comparison of consonantal inscriptions from the ninth century BCE with vocalized manuscripts from the tenth and eleventh centuries CE. A sense of how deeply intertwined the Bible is with Western scholarly tradition comes in the fact that much of early Jewish and Christian scholarship actually consisted of shaping the Bible itself, not simply interpreting it.

Through the Hellenistic period, religious scholars continued to collect Hebrew texts in a rainbow of genres, from narrative to law to proverb and prayer, and to stabilize their sometimes quite divergent texts in a mainly consonantal script. At the same time, they transmitted related ancient traditions of reading those consonantal texts that preserved far more information, not only vowels but prosodic information about stress and sentence structure. These varying traditions were not transcribed until Late Antiquity when they were written down in three different systems, each of which represents different aspects of the given reading tradition. The result is a remarkably promising and challenging set of documents. The Hebrew Bible preserves the broadest spectrum of linguistic data and literary forms of any of its ancient North–West Semitic relatives, but through documentary veils dating from the early Iron Age through Late Antiquity.

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Like many languages, "Hebrew" is a unifying label put on a spectrum of closely related language varieties, and there is no evidence that Hebrew was thought of as a unity before the Hellenistic period; Gzella describes it as "an umbrella term for several Canaanite varieties united by a common culture with considerable regional diversity" (2015, 429 cf. Ullendorff 1971). Multiple forms of Hebrew must have already been spoken in the early Iron Age, a situation clearly implied by the diverse syntax and tense systems of the most archaic Hebrew poetry, and documented in the ninth century BCE inscriptions. The only term for a native language in the Bible, "Judean," would not have originally denoted Hebrew more broadly because it comes from the name of a tribe, Judah, that is not even mentioned in the oldest known tribal list (Judges 5).

By the late ninth century a written form clearly recognizable as ancient Hebrew had been unified administratively as the official language of both the southern kingdom of Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel. Its iconic importance is suggested by the disproportionately large number of stamp seals with writing from the southern Levant, as opposed to Mesopotamia, Syria, or Anatolia (Millard 2001), and the fact that written Hebrew is the only excavated artifact which corresponds closely to the borders of Israel and Judah described in Kings. Yet after the Babylonian conquest in 586, this language submerges almost completely from our view not because it ceased to be spoken but because the written artifact nearly disappears, only to be politically revived for the last time before the modern era in Qumran Hebrew and the Bar-Kokhba revolts. In the first period for which language terms for what we call Hebrew are abundant, the Greek *hebraisti* can denote either Hebrew or Aramaic and *hebraios* can denote a speaker of either language. "Hebrew" first clearly emerges as a native linguistic term only in the Mishnah (*gittin* 9:6, 9:8; *yadayim* 4:5; c. 200 CE) but "the holy language" or "the language of the Sages" is still preferred in Rabbinic literature.

Time of Attestation, Phases and Branches

"Ancient Hebrew" consists of a set of dialects first clearly documented in the southern Levant in the late ninth century BCE and of which the latest examples date around 50 CE, after which its distinctive narrative prose system had been completely replaced with a simpler system of tenses. It was transmitted in two main streams, spoken and written, and its history is the history of their divergence and re-combining. While some tenth century BCE names show elements of Hebrew, the earliest examples substantial enough to show Hebrew's distinctive combination of features appear in a set of blessings and practice texts found at the southern site of Kuntillet Ajrud in the Sinai. While found in the south, these earliest significant known Hebrew texts are actually northern (as shown by the human and divine names) demonstrating that written Hebrew was already spread across the southern Levant through trade and military networks. Already the official language of both the northern kingdom of Israel and the Southern kingdom of Judah when first documented, the Babylonian conquest dethroned Hebrew's official written status in the early sixth century, to be replaced by Imperial Aramaic. It continued through the Persian Period in what appears to us now as two underground streams: a range of spoken dialects and a scholarly

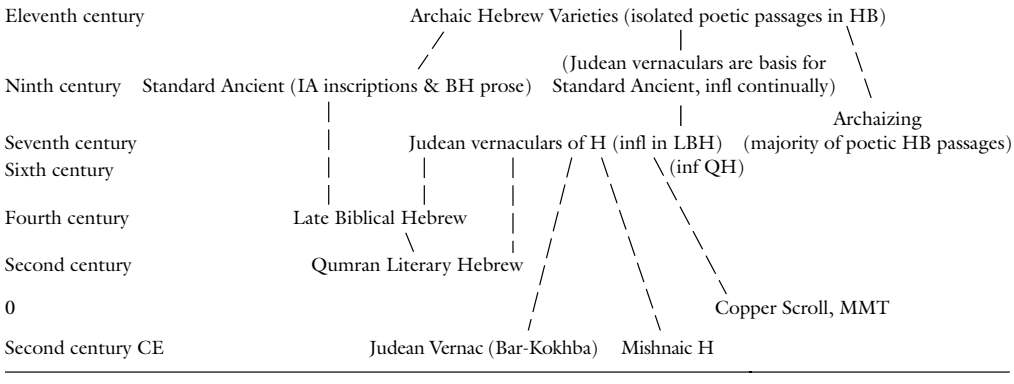
form of writing. These two streams reemerge independently in the Hellenistic period, when the Dead Sea Scrolls show a learned variety that has developed in new ways, alongside a colloquial variety that developed in others. The Hebrew documents from the time of Bar Kokhba represent one last attempt to reunite the colloquial and official streams in a short-lived but significant effort to make Hebrew the official language of a kingdom once more.

When are we justified in calling an ancient dialect Hebrew? Hebrew shares key features with its Iron Age relatives, including a North-West Semitic verbal system contrasting a prefixed (primarily) imperfective form, a suffixed perfective form, and a prefixed volitive form, and with its Canaanite relatives a *h-* definite article against Aramaic. More narrowly, it shares a masculine plural *–m* on nouns with Phoenician, and – most closely – the *ʾašer* relative particle, the *ʾet* definite direct object marker, and *ʿśh* as the basic word for "do, make" with Moabite. But even this basic list breaks down by the Hellenistic period when the participle has become central to a tensed verbal system and everyday Hebrew loses the *ʾašer* to *še* and the *–m* plural to *–n* (e.g. the Copper Scroll). In fact, any more precise definition involves a fundamental element of anachronism. An example is a distinctive feature of the ancient Hebrew verbal system, the "inverted" *weqatal* with future tense reference. We already find this in some Canaano-Akkadian letters of the fourteenth century southern Levant, as well as isolated instances in late Iron Age NWS texts (e.g. Phoenician at Karatepe; Pardee 1983, 66–7). But while the form is firmly in place in ancient Hebrew prose, and already attested in the earliest readable Standard Hebrew texts of epigraphic Hebrew (*wntn* in KAjr pythos 2), the archaic Hebrew poems show no sign of it. The most typologically early variety of biblical Hebrew, evident in the Song of Moses (Deut 32), the Song of Deborah (Ju 5), the Song of the Sea (Ex 15), and in the two main poetic sections of the Song of David (II Sam 22:5–20, 33–46) shows highly restricted use of *qatal* forms, and no sign of volitive or future *weqatal* (Notarius 2013, 289–91; Rainey 1996 I, 358). By contrast, *weqatal* is well in place in classical BH prophetic poetry (e.g. Is 6:7, Is 28:13, Amos 9:14 Ex 6:6). In transitional texts such as Ezekiel and late texts like Esther and Daniel (Rooker 1990, 120–22; Joosten 2005), uses of the future *weqatal* start to break down.

Most documents of ancient Hebrew's history come in the form of edited scholarly, poetic, and liturgical language, its conservatism obscuring some of the typical signs of linguistic change. This means that the phases of ancient Hebrew are most reliably determined by features which speakers and writers are least likely to be aware of (Silverstein 1981, Joosten 2005, Eskhult 2005, Sanders 2017). These features tend to lie primarily in the sentence-level patterns of syntax and only secondarily by the more easily noticed (and imitated) criteria of morphology, vocabulary, and (least reliably) spelling.

Because canonical texts like Exodus and Deuteronomy include highly archaic passages in standard ancient Hebrew contexts but are considered definitive of biblical Hebrew, this means that ancient Hebrew cannot be defined by purely grammatical criteria. Instead, ancient Hebrew as we know it emerged as the product of two acts of standardization: the scribal creation of a standard ancient Hebrew in a uniform script, and the later collection of the linguistically varied texts of the Hebrew Bible. While the earliest poetry has the closest typological connections to texts attested from the fourteenth to ninth centuries,

there was still no attempt to write an identifiable Hebrew in a distinctive script in the eleventh to tenth centuries, where the script is general Canaanite or early Standard Phoenician and the onomastics are Phoenician or Canaanite (as shown by the epigraphic evidence from Qeiyafa, Jerusalem, and Rehov). The type of ancient Hebrew which we can define by strict linguistic criteria is the form promulgated by scribes and attested across Israel and Judah from the late Iron Age to the Babylonian exile, as well as in large portions of the Hebrew Bible. This form is anachronistically known as Classical Biblical but is more accurately termed Standard Ancient Hebrew, because it required both political will and educational labor to create.



Our evidence of the early to mid-Iron Age (eleventh to tenth centuries BCE) language varieties of the southern Levant suggests that what was later written as standard ancient Hebrew was more varied. The Canaano-Akkadian Amarna letters from the region already show local variation in Tense-Mood-Aspect systems as well as vocalic patterns (Izre'el 2003), and this syntactic variation is evident in the varied modes evident in the most typologically archaic known Hebrew texts, the isolated passages of poetry in Genesis 49, Exodus 15, the poetic sections of Numbers 23–24 Deuteronomy 32 and 33, Judges 5, and 2 Samuel 22 (as well as arguably 1 Samuel 2, cf. Notarius 2013, Albright 1968, and Psalm 68, cf. Pat-El and Wilson-Wright 2013). They appear to modern scholars – and to the later ancient poets who imitated their style to create the archaizing poetry present in much of the Hebrew Bible – as unpredictable (for example Bloch 2009). Due to their status as markedly ancient poetic artifacts, it is plausible that these texts were transmitted with a high degree of their non-standardized variation intact (Schniedewind 2013, 53).

While ancient Hebrew was always a multiplicity of dialects, most of these differences are either unrepresented or edited away in our main body of evidence, the Hebrew Bible. But crucial epigraphically documented cases for Northern Hebrew are the collapse of diphthongs (Samaria Ostraca *yên* < *yayin* "wine") and the preservation of the feminine nominal *–t* (Samaria *šatt* "year"). The Hebrew Bible may also deliberately depict difference, in setting scenes in the north with vocabulary terms such as *kad* "jar", perhaps in contrast with *nēbel*.

The earliest proposed inscriptional evidence must be sifted carefully because some is of linguistically dubious relationship to Hebrew. There is nothing definitively Hebrew, as opposed to Iron Age Canaanite, about the Gezer calendar, and the Tel Zayit ostracon is

most plausibly a list of Phoenician type names, written using Late Bronze Age sign forms and Egyptian-style word dividers. By contrast, the late ninth century Kuntillet Ajrud letters already display the taxonomically Hebrew *weqatal* usage. What is important to recognize is that by this time scribal training has already been greatly standardized across both north and south, as suggested by the very similar script style and orthography of south (at Arad XI) and north (since the names and references to Samaria indicate the scribes of Kuntillet Ajrud are northern; for the relationship between Northern and Southern training see Sanders 2009 building on Renz 1997, Rollston 2006). It is here that we can first view Hebrew as a full linguistic phenomenon.

There is a striking fit between the deepest syntactic phenomena of ancient Hebrew as attested in pre-exilic biblical prose and the inscriptions of the Iron Age. A powerful example of this is the role of the prefix forms in sentence structure: despite their surface appearance as a finite verb form symmetrical with the suffix form, indicative prefix forms never begin sentences in ancient Hebrew, with the important and common exception of jussives. The Ketef Hinnom silver amulets, dating to around 700 BCE and sharing almost all the same wording as the Priestly blessing, begin every sentence with a jussive. A feature shared by epigraphic and some archaic Hebrew texts is the writing of the 3ms possessive and object suffixes as *–h* (originally representing *hū*) though as an orthographic feature possibly representing historical spelling it is linguistically ambivalent. But in almost every taxonomically significant area epigraphically attested Hebrew is not a distinct language variety but simply a set of instances of Standard Ancient Hebrew, less archaic, for example, in its consistent use of the relative pronoun *ʾšr* as opposed to archaic biblical passages which use *z-*, corresponding to an archaic WS form **d̲-*, and the vernacular form *š* (which is also perhaps archaic, if it corresponds to original **t̲-*).

Some phenomena of spelling that are more prevalent in inscriptions may reflect the practices of working scribes as opposed to the high-cultural literary training of Judean scholars of the court or post-exilic communities (for these interesting – though not taxonomic – details see Young 2003). An example of this is the inconsistent use of vowel letters: while the earliest Hebrew inscriptions show a restricted use of vowels and the use expands over time, some of the expansion is inconsistent, suggesting these conventions were not considered as essential nor as consistently taught.

Language Affiliation (Language Family, Sub-Group)

Hebrew is a North-West Semitic language, with its best-documented ancient relatives being Phoenician, Aramaic, and Ugaritic, documented in alphabetic scripts, though none of these systematically preserve information about vowels. Valuable information about earlier phases of this language group is preserved in cuneiform in vocalized form from four sources: Amorite (a broad term for West Semitic varieties of the late third and early second millennium) names transcribed by Babylonian scribes from across Mesopotamia, native Amorite vocabulary transcribed by Amorite-speaking scribes from the kingdom of Mari during the Old Babylonian period, North-West Semitic terms transcribed by native scribes at Late Bronze Age Ugarit and Emar, and the diplomatic correspondence in various sorts

of intertwined *lingua franca*, mostly known from the Canaano-Akkadian of fourteenth century BCE Amarna but also found, e.g. from thirteenth century BCE Tyre and Sidon at Ugarit (Sanders 2009, 205–6 n.38).

The second-millennium sources help clarify both the linguistic and cultural heritage of Hebrew; unusual features of Hebrew narrative and poetry make more sense seen in light of earlier West Semitic verbal systems, and distinctive political and religious concepts are anchored in earlier kinship and ritual terminology. The southern Canaano-Akkadian texts show a contrasting *yaqtul*–preterite, *yaqtulu*-durative, and *qatala*-stative system (Rainey 1986), but the Canaano-Akkadian texts from Byblos – like Ugaritic prose texts – already show the increasing dominance of *qatala* forms for the past that has become the norm in late Iron Age Northwest Semitic (as an example of the limitations of names, which can take stereotyped or restricted forms, there are some 7000 Amorite names which also display a *yaqtul*-preterite and a *qatala*-stative, but give no clear examples of any contrasting durative or present-future form, for which historical linguistics would suggest **yaqtulu*, despite the fact that such an absence is linguistically unlikely).

Meanwhile the Mari Amorite texts give us our first examples of key West Semitic cultural and political terms – ones not native to Babylonian – -that emerge in Hebrew. The kinship-based political structure of Mari was organized into units of *li'mum* and *ga'yum* (cf. Hebrew *lᵉ'ôm* and *gôy* "nation, population of a territory, as opposed to kin group"), and use the term *ʿammum* (cf. Hebrew *ʿam* "people, kin group") for a senior male kinsman. An example of the centrality of these terms in Amorite culture is the prevalence of the *ʿammu-* stem in royal names like Hammurapi "the (divine) kinsman is a 'healer' (prestigious ancestor)" and Ammi-Saduqa "my (divine) kinsman is just." While divinized ancestors of the *rapi'*-class appear in Amorite names and Ugaritic ritual, in first millennium Hebrew texts they exist in tension with Judahite cult and are demoted to merely forgotten dead. Meanwhile *ʿammu* has become so central to ancient Hebrew self-definition that Israel is defined as the *ʿam* of Yahweh, his kin-group.

Writing System

From the Iron Age through the Babylonian period Hebrew was written in a local script emerging in the tenth century BCE (Finkelstein and Sass 2013), developed from the second millennium West Semitic linear alphabet, that was standardized in form and spelling by the late ninth century. Archaeological evidence such as papyrus impressions on bullae suggests the vast majority of this early Hebrew was written on papyrus (Haran 1982) but almost all of our evidence is inscribed in stone or painted on potsherds. But when written Hebrew reemerges in late Persian Judea it is written mainly in Aramaic script on parchment, in keeping with the media standards of the Persian empire. Local Samaritan and Qumran scholarly tradition retained an archaic or archaizing Hebrew script.

An equally important question is when and in what form our written data come to us. There are two types of data: unvocalized, roughly contemporary inscriptions, and the significantly later vocalized texts of Hebrew Scripture. Of the inscriptions, the body of Iron Age inscriptions is archaeologically dated to the late ninth through early sixth centuries BCE, and the corpus from the Dead Sea from about 200 BCE–50 CE. Seventh century BCE Judean

scribes were already engaged in the collection, transmission, and editing of texts and the early stages of this scholarly and religious work brought together a rainbow of genres, from narrative to law to proverb and prayer, beginning to stabilize their sometimes quite divergent texts in consonantal form. Religious scholars transmitted further crucial information in the form of ancient reading traditions, preserving not only vowels but prosodic information about stress and sentence structure. These were transmitted orally through late antiquity when they were written down in three different native systems. These systems, the Tiberian, Palestinian, and Babylonian, each represent somewhat different reading traditions and different aspects of the texts' sound structure.

Paradoxically, the oldest known complete vocalization of biblical Hebrew is in Greek and shows some typologically later features than the historically later Tiberian tradition (documented by about eighth century CE). This is the third century CE Greek transliteration in the second column of Origen's critical edition of the Hebrew Bible. For example, it represents the 2ms object suffix as *–ak* where Tiberian Hebrew has *–ka*. In this case the Hexaplaric reading of the suffix represents a later stage of the language, as the same form is seen in Mishnaic Hebrew. By contrast the Hexaplaric (as well as the Babylonian) reading represents an earlier stage in the case of the sound shift known as Philippi's Law, as it lacks the shift of **i* to *a* in originally closed accented syllables; sound laws would predict an earlier form of the type **zāqēntî* "I became old," which we find in the Hexapla, as opposed to the typologically later Tiberian *zāqantî*. Similarly, the Hexapla's reading tradition preserves the earlier form of *qVtl*-type nouns (*ɣabr* vs. Tiberian *ɣeḇer*).

Textual Evidence: Genres, Approximate Number of Texts

There are two corpora of ancient Hebrew: the Iron Age epigraphic remains, mainly from the ninth through sixth centuries BCE, and the edited literary collections of the Hebrew Bible and Dead Sea Scrolls (with scattered nonliterary texts), physically dating to the Hellenistic period and later. The Iron Age epigraphic corpus consists mainly of short everyday bureaucratic texts (e.g. names inscribed or stamped on objects, receipts, and letters), wall inscriptions (mainly grave markers, blessings, and curses, as in Khirbet el Qom), and a scant few ritual and religious texts (e.g. the Ketef Hinnom amulets). The actual number of preserved Iron Age texts is not obvious, first because we must decide what counts as a legible, linguistically significant "text" and second because it is not clear how many are authentic. To count as a text it is simplest to exclude isolated, damaged words and difficult, linguistically ambiguous examples that may or may not be Hebrew, as well as multiple copies of the same identical word or phrase, such as the hundreds of stamped *lmlk* "of the king" jar handles. But the biggest difficulty is that the epigraphic database is awash in unprovenanced artifacts from the antiquities market, most of which must be assumed to be forged because of the intense personal, institutional, and financial interest that the Bible and ancient Israel hold for many today. Of Avigad and Sass' 1997 collection of over 700 Hebrew seals, only 89 are provenanced; subsequent discoveries bring the total to around 150. Similarly, there are about 200 provenanced ancient Hebrew inscriptions, most of which are very short or fragmentary.

The Hebrew Bible and Hebrew Dead Sea Scrolls are highly varied, including narratives, liturgy, prophetic poetry, law, and proverbs. The Qumran materials add exegetical commentaries, ritual calendars, "scientific" essays on physiognomy and astrology, and rulebooks. The prophetic collections present the greatest variety in length from Jeremiah, at 33 000 words, to Obadiah's 440 words. The Bible's count includes the symbolic Jewish traditional number of 24 books derived from counting some books as one (e.g. "Ezra-Nehemiah") but goes up to 39 in the Protestant tradition which divides Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles into 2. Meanwhile there are some 50 more distinct Hebrew compositions represented in the Qumran fragments, physically dated to the first two centuries BCE. This gives us less than 400 mostly tiny epigraphic Hebrew texts from the Iron Age and perhaps 90 much longer literary texts with manuscripts found in the Hellenistic period.

Geographical Setting

Ancient Hebrew inscriptions have been found as far north as the Sea of Galilee (Bethsaida) and as far south as Arad and the Kuntillet Ajrud waystation in the Sinai peninsula. These findspots correspond roughly to the locations of the kingdoms of Judah and, before the late eighth century, Israel. The few exceptions, like the plundered Hebrew-inscribed ivories at Nimrud, prove the rule. Thus, the most striking geographical pattern of ancient written Hebrew is political. This is true to such an extent that Hebrew inscriptions are the only material artifact that may correspond at all closely to the culture area of ancient Israel. Writing is a stronger and more consistent marker of active self-definition than any other artifact including art, weapons, or pottery.

Historical Setting and Language Contact

Hebrew's geographical position set the stage for its linguistic role, not only in its connections with neighboring language varieties but in terms of its role as a recipient of loanwords from the empires that overtook it from further away. Linguistically, it stands between the Aramaic of the North and East, the Phoenician of the Northwest coast, and the spectrum of Canaanite dialects to the East and South: Moabite, Ammonite, and Edomite.

The political picture of the southern Levant in the late Bronze Age was of a series of relatively isolated city-states and towns, under the loose rule of an exploitative Egyptian empire. Artifacts of this relationship are the range of scribal professional and technical terms shared between Egyptian and West Semitic, suggesting the long cultural relationship reflected in the fact that the West Semitic alphabet was first developed by West Semitic-speaking workers in Egypt, using Egyptian hieroglyphic and hieratic sign-forms. The Egyptian papyrus Anastasi preserves a Late Bronze Age Egyptian text in which a scribe is called *mahir*, a West Semitic term for "skillful." Hebrew terms for "ink" and "stylus," among others, derive from Egyptian (Schniedewind 2013, 57).

Both the rise of Hebrew, as a written vernacular, and its later shift from disappearance to revival, were driven by political change (Sanders 2009). The initial impact of Imperial Aramaic on Hebrew was precipitated by the conquest of the northern kingdom by Assyria

in 722, in which the related deportations and resettlements precipitated the shift of Israelites into Aramaic speakers, which was followed by the conquest of Judah by Babylon around 586. Because of its nature as an official medium of state bureaucracy, written Hebrew is not a particularly sensitive indicator of these shifts. Viewed strictly from the perspective of its written artifacts, Hebrew appears to flower around the seventh century but then simply disappears during the sixth, an abrupt pattern that does not match the pattern of actual Hebrew speech. The discontinuous history of written Hebrew through the exile shows continuous influence from vernacular Hebrew forms: thus even near its apparent end in the sixth century, new Hebrew vocabulary continues to surface such as the Hapax *śtʿ* "be afraid" in Isaiah 41:10. By contrast Late Biblical Hebrew shows more conservatism and greater distance from vernacular forms, as suggested by its lack of Hapaxes (Schniedewind 2013, 151).

Typical of the late Iron Age base of much biblical Hebrew narrative and law are the loaned usages and calqued phrases we find in Deuteronomic literature. Here the commands to "love" a ruler (God in Deuteronomy, analogous to the Assyrian emperor in the Vassal Treaties) reflect a cultural pattern of self-surveillance imposed in specific political circumstances, as well as poetic phrases connecting a bronze sky and iron earth (Deut 28:23) to indicate lack of rain and ensuring starvation.

The elements of Hebrew follow political change again in the demographic disruption of the Babylonian exile. After this period loan vocabulary becomes pervasively Aramaic and Persian, then also Greek in the latest stages of biblical Hebrew. Archaeologists estimate that over 65% of Persian-period Judean towns were new foundations (Schniedwind 2013, 144). An example of how such loans function as artifacts revealing complex chains of culture contact is the Late Biblical Hebrew word *zʿmān* "appointed time." While it is originally an Akkadian word, first documented in Old Babylonian *simānu*, its shape is best explained through the cultures in contact after the exile, as the shift from initial *s* > *z* is most plausibly accounted for by derivation from Babylonian into Old Persian **žamāna* (with typical assimilatory voicing of the initial *s-*), then as *z-* into Aramaic and then into Hebrew.

Historical and Cultural Factors: The Ancient Scholarly Shaping of Hebrew

Hebrew as we have it represents a break from the Iron Age history of the West Semitic languages, which constituted a whole range of non-standardized forms before they became subject to philological discipline in the first millennium. The transformation of Hebrew by means of its writing into a political and literary language was the deliberate work of scribes, likely sponsored by the royal courts of Israel, Judah, or both. This fits a more widespread pattern noted by Sheldon Pollock (2006) in which local vernacular literatures typically arise in response to more widespread global ones.

Of all this Iron Age linguistic engineering, written Hebrew is the closest to us because it represents the first successful vernacular literature, one that served as source for every Western vernacular literature after it (Hastings 1997). Yet, the Hebrew Bible as we have it encapsulates both the growth and abandonment of vernacular Hebrew. The core of the

Hebrew Bible, the most-quoted parts including the Pentateuch and major prophetic books, was most plausibly written down in the eighth to sixth centuries BCE, when Hebrew was the official and local language of the kingdom of Judah. But the work of native scholars continued on through late antiquity (when its vocalization system stems from) and then through today. This made it both the first successful vernacular and the most complex literary artifact from the ancient Near East.

If Hebrew arose out of contests between the alphabetic court vernaculars of local North-West-Semitic kingdoms, it also includes its chief other – Aramaic (Gzella 2015). In the Hebrew Bible Aramaic is remembered as an imperial language and also a family member, where its vernacular origins are embodied quite literally as the uncle of the eponymous ancestor of Israel. For Jacob, who is dubbed Israel after his struggle with the angel, also struggles with his cheating uncle Laban the Aramean, and it is Laban who sparks the only example of Hebrew-Aramaic translation in the Bible (Genesis 31, 46–48, 52).

In the core texts of the Hebrew Bible, the transition between Hebrew and Aramaic is marked in striking ways – when the foreign language is named, it is always in contexts of conflict or accommodation. In addition to the covenant between Jacob and Laban – who was threatening to kill him – the most striking contrast is evoked in the metalinguistic passages that actually use the term "Aramaic," each of which mark a passage into Aramaic. The first is a diplomatic scene set around 700 BCE and important enough to be repeated almost verbatim in the Bible, in both Kings and Isaiah. In 2 Kings 18/Isaiah 36 "Aramaic" marks a failed attempt at a code-switch, suggesting a power struggle concerning whose code is being switched from and into. The passage creates a past in tension between the imperial Neo-Assyrian and the local vernacular Judahite that cannot be mediated by Aramaic.

The term "Aramaic" appears two more times in the Hebrew Bible, but in these later cases they mark a successful transition in the Persian-period book of Ezra and the Hellenistic book of Daniel. In the case of Ezra (4:7), the search for an Aramaic document justifying the rebuilding of the temple is represented as a victory for the Judeans. Aramaic has taken on the power to embody authoritative knowledge in Ezra, and the language of superior wisdom in Daniel (2:4).

Grammatical Sketch

Consonants

As a family, West Semitic shares the distinctive feature of shifting initial I-*w* words to I-*y*, thus Hebrew (and Ugaritic etc.) *yḥd* "be one, alone" over against Arabic, Ethiopic *wḥd*; Hebrew *yeled* "youth" but earlier Akkadian *wildu*, Arabic *walad*, a phenomenon already attested in Amorite (Amorite, Hebrew, Ugaritic *yqr* "dignified, valuable" vs Arabic and early Akkadian *wqr*).

In its range of sounds, ancient Hebrew retained a relatively larger portion of the original West Semitic inventory – more than its coastal sibling Phoenician, which was often at the forefront of change, though less than the more widely dispersed Aramaic. Because the Hebrew alphabet was based on the narrower Phoenician it could only represent 22 consonants, but it can be conclusively shown that Hebrew actually distinguished 25 sounds

through the early Hellenistic period (Steiner 2005). It is another reminder of the literary veil between ancient Hebrew speakers and us that two of these are entirely invisible to readers of the Hebrew Bible. The Masoretic spelling tradition did faithfully preserve the distinction between the *s* (*samekh*) and the *ś* (*śin*) sound, which the Masoretes themselves pronounced identically. But it is only the Greek transliterations of Hebrew place- and personal names in the early Septuagint translation of the Pentateuch that show that until the late Hellenistic period, Hebrew systematically differentiated between the *ḥ* and *ḫ* sounds, as well as the ʿ and *ḡ*. The following chart shows which consonants are represented in which layers of evidence:

Iron Age through early Hellenistic	ʾbgdhwzḥḫṭyklmnsʿḡpṣqršśt
Consonantal framework	ʾbgdhwzḥ_ ṭyklmnsʿ_pṣqrš_t
Masoretic spelling	ʾbgdhwzḥ_ ṭyklmnsʿ_pṣqršśt

A complexity of the Masoretic vocalization system is that it preserves a phase in which six consonantal stops, bgdkpt, were spirantized after vowels. Because this happened before the final phase of vowel reduction, this led to a situation where some consonants originally preceded by vowels retained spirantization even after those vowels disappeared, thus in that system the second t in *kāṯaḇtā* "you (m) wrote" is stopped after a consonant while the first is spirantized, but the b in *kāṯḇâ* "she wrote" (<*kāṯaḇâ)* is spirantized despite being in the same type of postconsonantal position. Because this phonetic feature further complicates the appearance of ancient Hebrew while virtually never affecting its phonology or grammatical structure it is not indicated here.

Vowels

Hebrew is a distinctively coastal variety of Northwest Semitic, sharing with Phoenician and the Canaanite varieties of the Amarna letters the "Canaanite shift" of *ā* to *ō*. As the first-millennium varieties developed all lost their final short vowels and thus the older shared case system. As a result, the syntax of these languages shifted to mark definiteness and direct object case, resulting in the Hebrew *ha*+doubling and the *ʾet-* forms. Archaic poetic passages – as well as archaizing passages echoing them – tend to have fewer of these forms, even as case vowels are only preserved in rare and dubious cases.

Ancient Hebrew's vowel system continued the length-based system of early West Semitic, comprising *a i u* and the diphthongs *aw* and *ay*, with the addition of short and long *e* and *o* developing with shifts in stress and syllable structure. Significantly different is the later Masoretic system which only distinguishes them by quality, though Greek transliterations and comments show that the system remained quantitative through at least the fourth century CE. But early medieval transcriptions into Arabic show that by then, vowel length in the Masoretic reading tradition had begun to purely follow stress (Khan 1987) and was not phonemically meaningful. Modern scholarly transliteration makes the artificial – if useful and historically based – direct connection between the earlier quantitative vowel system and the later Masoretic qualitative one. This clarifies grammar at the cost of certain false impressions (e.g. that *tsere –ē-* is simply the lengthened form of *seghol e* rather than a higher vowel).

Prosody

Inseparable from the Masoretic vocalization tradition and of at least equal age is the cantillation system. Though it is not always taught in the originally Protestant-Seminary-based American and European programs of biblical and Hebrew studies, it is impossible to fully understand ancient Hebrew vocalization and morphology without it. In fact, the linguistic information the Masoretes preserved went far beyond the phonemic data necessary to fully differentiate words or the orthographic data necessary to consistently spell them, and included purely phonetic information such as Sandhi, when the sounds at the end of one word affect the sounds – though not the meaning – of a following word. Without the cantillation system many Masoretic vocalizations and grammatical forms are inexplicable: The most obvious problem this raises is the many cases of more archaic linguistic forms preserved in "pause," at the ends of phrases or sentences. These pausal forms appear according to, and are predicted by, "closed" cantillation signs marking the end of a prosodic unit. The fact that – unlike in Greek, Latin, or Arabic tradition, but similar to Sanskrit – so much purely phonetic and prosodic information was included is an important linguistic and cultural fact. It suggests that the goal of the Masoretic system was not so much to provide semantic information for interpreting the text's meaning – a function which the Rabbis usually conducted by memory (Wollenberg 2017) – as to provide a sort of libretto for exactly repeated vocal performance.

Syllable Structure and Stress

Ancient Hebrew only allowed two types of syllables, *CV* and *CVC*, because in contrast to East Semitic and, for example, Greek or English, West Semitic languages cannot begin syllables with vowels. Words are stressed on the final syllable (*ultima*) by default but stress shifts forward due to inflection or, especially frequent in nouns, because the word preserves an earlier structure where the penultimate syllable was stressed. Most important changes in ancient Hebrew vocalization result from the interaction of syllable structure and stress. For example, *nāhār* "river" (<**nahar*, with stress-lengthening of the second a and pretonic lengthening of the first) but *mélek* (<**malk*, with anaptyctic *–e-* inserted and vowel-coloring of the original *–a-*). Because the Masoretic cantillation system typically places its marks over the stressed syllable, cantillation marks indicate almost all cases of non-final stress.

Pronouns

The Hebrew system of independent pronouns is organized like that of its first millennium relatives, and shares easily identifiable features with the suffixed versions. See Table 15.1.

The system of demonstrative pronouns, by contrast, is sparse, with only a dedicated near demonstrative *zeh*; for far demonstratives Hebrew uses the third person independent pronouns. The relative pronoun distinctive to ancient Hebrew and the southern Levant is *ʾᵃšer*, more rarely and also poetically *še-*.

The definite article is *ha-* which occurs with doubling of the first consonant. This form is shared with Phoenician and Moabite but appears absent from other Northwest Semitic

Table 15.1 Hebrew independent pronouns and pronominal suffixes.

Independent				*Suffixed*			
Person	*Gender*	*Singular*	*Plural*	*Person*	*Gender*	*Singular*	*Plural*
1	c	*ʾānōkí, ʿānî*	*ⁿnaḥnú*	1	c	*-î*	*-nú*
2	m	*ʾattâ*	*ʾattem*	2	m	*-kâ*	*-kem*
	f	*ʾatt*	*ʾattennâ*		f	*-ek*	*-ken*
3	m	*hû'*	*hēm*	3	m	*-ô*	*-ām*
	f	*hî'*	*henna*		f	*-â*	*-ān*

languages (though it may have a precursor in the Ugaritic deictic *han-*), and it is rare in archaic Hebrew, suggesting that it arose to compensate for the loss of directly marked case relations.

Nouns

Hebrew nouns display the two genders and originally three numbers – singular, dual, and plural – of proto-Semitic, but the dual mainly appears as a relic in the fixed forms for the body parts (*ʿénayim* "eyes" *yadayim* "hands" etc.), effectively functioning as a plural. Hebrew nouns have three states: a basic unmarked form (e.g. *bāyit* "house") a definite state with a prefixed article and doubling of the first consonant (*habbāyit* "the house") and a "bound" genitive state, in which the noun loses stress because it forms a single noun phrase with the following word (*bêt ʿav* "father's house, paternal family unit"). In the bound form the loss of stress often shortens the noun resulting in diphthong collapse. This stress shift also occurs on nouns with possessive suffixes, which structurally resemble the bound form: *bāyit* but *bêtāh* "her house."

The plural forms are clearest on nouns with simple, unchangeable syllabic structure:

sûs "horse" *sûsîm* "horses"

**sûsâ* "mare" **sûsôt* "mares"

Most distinctive and historically revealing of Hebrew nouns within Northwest Semitic is the large class of nouns with an originally monosyllabic *qVtl* base which developed into bisyllabic "segholate" forms with penult stress. This common type displays three forms: the normal absolute form, the historically earlier monosyllabic *qVtl* stem form, and the bisyllabic "internal" plural *qVtal* stem form, a phenomenon also found in the other major branches of Semitic (and also some Afroasiatic varieties, with the important exception of East Semitic). The historically earlier base vowel is visible when bound to a suffix: for *qatl*-nouns *ʿereṣ* "earth" from **ʾarṣ* (compare Hexaplaric *ars*) cf. *ʿarṣô*; *kelev* "dog" but *kalbô* "his dog." Similarly, with *qitl*-nouns *sēfer* "book" but *siprô* and *qutl*-nouns *ḥōdeš* "month" but *ḥodšô*.

A picture of how the core of one very common Hebrew noun type shifts with suffixes is given by a segholate noun such as *derek*. See Table 15.2:

Table 15.2 Nouns with pronominal suffixes.

	Singular	*Dual (rare)*	*Plural*
Basic form	***derek*** "path"	***dʿrākayim*** "two paths"	***dʿrākîm*** "paths" (pl. construct ***darkê*** X)
Suffixed form	***darkî*** "my path"	***darkay*** "my two paths"	***dʿrākay*** "my paths" (w closed-syllable sfxs ***darkêkem, darkêkem)***

The typologically earlier form of the noun from NWS ****dark-*** is visible in the singular and dual suffixed forms, as well as the plural forms with closed-syllable suffixes, while a different internal plural stem ***dʿrāk (<*darak-***) is visible in most plural forms.

Verbal System and Syntax

The verbal system shares the common Semitic system of stems (including the C- causative, D- doubled/intensive, N- reflexive/passive), with the causative stem showing the typical West Semitic outcome of *h-* in contrast to East Semitic *š*. This system is often preserved intact, including the infixed *–t* reflexive in the D-stem and internal passives in the C- and D- stems, but elements were lost between the time of Standard Ancient Hebrew and the fixing of the vocalization systems, including the Gp internal passive **qutaba* "it was written," which has usually been anachronistically vocalized as N or Dp. See Tables 15.3 and 15.4.

While the indicative finite Hebrew verbs are only explicitly marked for aspect, it is typical of the ancient Hebrew verbal system that full nuances of tense and mood are expressed through its complex syntax. Characteristic is the incorporation of highly archaic Northwest-Semitic features – including the prefixed preterite and the suffixed future or modal verb – into a systematized and predictable narrative form (cf. Huehnergard 2013). This contrasts with the verbal system in poetry, which shows a looser and more playful, even chaotic style that combines a lofty archaizing register with the developed use of hints and implicature (for the syntax of archaizing—though not archaic—poetry see Bloch 2009).

Hebrew's incorporation of old features into prose convention most plausibly arose as a way of creating a marked narrative form by framing it in a more archaic tense-aspect-mood system with a different division of labor between verb forms. It is unlikely that an ancient narrative use of preterite *yatqul* was simply frozen behind a *waw* (cf. McCarter 2008, 65 "The preterite force was lost … except in certain restricted environments, most characteristically the converted imperfect"). The datable North-West Semitic parallel for this restricted marked use is the prophetic speech passage from the Zakkur inscription where only the

Table 15.3 Hebrew verbal stems.

	G	*N*	*D*	*Dp*	*C*	*Cp*	*Dt*
Suffix	*kātab*	*niktab*	*kittēb*	*kuttab*	*hiktîb*	*hoktab*	*hitkattēb*
Prefix	*yiktōb*	*yikkātēb*	*yʿkattēb*	*yʿkuttab*	*yaktîb*	*yuktab*	*yitkattēb*

Table 15.4 Hebrew verbal conjugations.

	G Suffix Paradigm			*G Prefix Paradigm*	
	s		*p*	*s*	*p*
1c	*kātabtî*		*kātabnû*	*ʾektōb*	*niktōb*
2m	*kātabtā*		*kᵉtabtem*	*tiktōb*	*tikᵉbû*
2f	*kātabt*		*kᵉtabten*	*tikᵉbî*	*tiktōbnā*
3m	*kātab*	3c	*kātbû*	*yiktōb*	*yikᵉbû*
3f	*kātbâ*			*tiktōb*	*tiktōbnā*

framing indicators of prophetic verbs of speaking use *yaqtul* preterites with *waw* but the rest of the text uses the simple prefix vs suffix oppositions for narrating past events (Sanders forthcoming). This prose narrative system became a southern Levantine areal feature seen in Iron Age epigraphic material from Deir Alla and Moab as well as Hebrew, and in Standard Ancient Hebrew was generalized to everyday use (e.g. the Mesad Hashavyahu letter).

Hebrew's distinctive prose syntax fits into a broader generic feature of ancient Hebrew in contrast to the other best-documented ANE Semitic literatures of Ugaritic and Akkadian: the presence of imaginative prose narrative (cf. the observations of Kawashima 2004 on the absence of extended narrative prose from these literatures). That this mode is distinctive to the Southern Levant and not inevitable is suggested by Aramaic, which also develops narrative prose but lacks the waw-consecutive.

In keeping with Hebrew's subtle and powerful use of syntactic structure is the complementary distribution of the indicative and jussive prefixed verb forms. All prefixed verb forms that stand at the beginning of prose sentences are jussive, while indicative prefix forms either follow a *weqatal* future form or stand after a noun or particle (Niccacci 1990, Joosten 2005, 332–3). This subtlety leads to a widespread error in major grammars of Biblical Hebrew, which claim logically but wrongly that ancient Hebrew expresses the future (or habitual) in narrative with a simple imperfect + converted perfect sequence (e.g. Lambdin 1971, 108), where none of the invented example sentences are paralleled in attested ancient Hebrew texts). This is true of about 527 cases, where every prefix-form-initial sentence is either jussive or poetry (including prophetic announcements; the exception is a likely scribal error in Josh 21:42). An interesting apparent exception is Deuteronomy 28, where 14 sentences begin with prefix forms often translated as indicatives. That they were understood as jussives is made likely by their Akkadian model, the Vassal Treaty of Esarhaddon, where the parallel sequence appears with jussive *liprus* forms.

The most profound difference in later Hebrew is the shift from the syntax of a complex verbal system that primarily grammatically marks aspect, indicating tense through syntax and implicature, towards a simpler three-part system that is primarily tense marked. Formally this is visible in the decline of the *wayyiqtol* forms and rise of the verbal role of the participle, often to indicate either present tense or periphrastically (*hyh* + participle) to indicate habitual or continuous activity. But differences extend from syntax to vocabulary (a new plethora of Persian and, later, Greek loanwords) and idiom (for "every X" the Standard Ancient Hebrew *kōl* X is replaced by the more iconic Late Biblical Hebrew *kōl* X *we*-X). Our corpus is closed by the time of the Bar Kokhba period, where the underlying

structure of the language has often merged with Aramaic, e.g. Gzella's comment that "the participle as a core element of verbal syntax in the Hebrew Bar Kosiba Letters consistently follows contemporary Aramaic usage" (2005, 97).

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CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Phoenician and Punic

Françoise Briquel Chatonnet and Robert Hawley

Introduction

"Phoenician" is the name given by the Greeks to the language and culture of "Phoenicia", a loose grouping of cities, each with its hinterland, situated along the coastal strip of the Eastern Mediterranean seaboard, stretching roughly from Arwad in the north to Tyre in the south, with Byblos, Beirut and Sidon in between. The Phoenicians themselves did not employ a single global gentilic in this way, but instead defined themselves as Tyrians, Sidonians, etc. "Punic" (which derives from the Latin form for "Phoenician") is the name given to the manifestations of the same language and script attested in the Carthaginian world of the Western Mediterranean. The terms "Phoenician" and "Punic" are here retained for convenience, as a necessary category for discussing the pertinent data, and as a consequence of the last century and a half of scholarship.

Phoenician and Punic are known almost exclusively from epigraphic sources. Archeologically, the earliest of the Phoenician inscriptions can be dated to the beginning of the 1st millennium BCE, and the latest to the reign of the Roman emperor Augustus. Punic inscriptions are known from the mid-first millennium BCE through the first century BCE. Punic culture survived the destruction of Carthage, however, and continued to exist within the Roman Empire; this form of language and script is referred to as "Neo-Punic", attested until the third century of the common era (and even the fourth, although then transcribed into Latin characters, in the inscriptions of Sirte from Libya). Traces of even earlier stages of the language may be found sporadically in the cuneiform record, especially in the form of proper names, but also as isolated nouns and verbal forms appearing as substrate elements in the abundant diplomatic correspondence from the Late Bronze Age.

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Inversely, vestiges of Punic may also be found for example in Latin and Greek literature, as in the Latin works of the playwright Plautus and of Saint Augustine, and in the manuscript tradition of Dioscorides in Greek.

Although the language is, of course, attested in inscriptions from the heartland, ironically enough it is much better attested outside of Phoenicia proper. Indeed, the presence of Phoenician traders and merchants is attested not only in the North (Cilicia) and East (Mesopotamia), but also and especially in the West, where commercial colonies were founded throughout the Mediterranean, from Cyprus and Malta to Carthage and Cadix. This "Phoenician expansion" in the Mediterranean had almost certainly begun already in the ninth century BCE, and perhaps even earlier. Many of these "colonies" – and Carthage comes immediately to mind – rather quickly acquired independence, although political, religious, and commercial connections with the heartland continued to be cultivated. Modern scholars, for linguistic reasons, nevertheless group the full documentation, whether from the heartland or from the various colonies alike, under the broader rubric of "Phoenician and Punic".

Taken globally, the corpus of Phoenician inscriptions numbers upwards of 10 000 objects. This seemingly large number is deceptive, however, since many inscriptions are highly formulaic, and present virtually the same stereotyped wording, with the exception of personal names. The geographical distribution of the Phoenician corpus is also uneven. By far, the vast majority come from Carthage, and date to the third and early second centuries BCE.

The corpus is also essentially monumental, consisting of funerary or commemorative stelae intended for public display. This aspect of the corpus makes its linguistic study difficult, however, since very few documents from daily life are known, which ought, theoretically, to reflect more faithfully the language as it was actually spoken.

With respect to better known or better attested ancient languages, Phoenician appears to be linguistically most closely related to Old Hebrew, as attested in inscriptions and in the Hebrew Bible, for example. This linguistic proximity was even profound enough to lead early decipherers of Phoenician to use the square Hebrew block script for the publication of Phoenician inscriptions, a practice that continued until very recently.

Textual Evidence

Throughout their history, Phoenician and Punic inscriptions used the same graphic system, the 22-sign consonantal alphabet, which derives from the older Canaanite alphabet which had emerged already in the second millennium BCE. Whether this 22-sign system was accurate and appropriate for representing the consonantal inventory of 1st millennium Phoenician, however, is uncertain (cf. the dual pronunciation for the sign Š in Tiberian Hebrew for example, which may or may not be pertinent for Phoenician). Unlike Old Aramaic and epigraphic Hebrew, *matres lectionis* only appear very late, and mainly in Neo-Punic.

The Phoenician corpus may be conveniently divided in terms of its geographical distribution, with some indications of chronology for each geographical area.

The Heartland

Only a limited number of inscriptions are known from the heartland, but among these are some of the most significant, in terms not only of size and length, but also for chronology and political and cultural history. Typologically, Byblos provides the earliest substantial group of the inscriptions, all monumental and royal. A *terminus post quem* for the beginning of the Yeḥimilk dynasty, no earlier than the tenth century BCE, can be inferred from the fact that two of these are inscribed on monuments of the Egyptian pharaohs Sheshonq and Osorkon, but a later date cannot be excluded. In any case, the inscription on the Aḥirōm sarcophagus precedes this dynasty.

A variety of isolated and often fragmentary inscriptions are known from the eighth to seventh centuries, from Beirut, Sarepta, Sidon and Tyre: private funerary stelae, cultic inscriptions, epigraphs on jars and some ostraca, for example. The following Persian period (sixth to fourth centuries) has also yielded a number of quite important (and long) inscriptions, notably from Byblos (display inscription of Yeḥawmilk, funerary inscription of queen Batnoam) and from Sidon (funerary on the sarcophagi of Tabnit and Ešmunazor, dedicatory of king Bodʿaštart, Ešmunšillek). Inscribed seals must also be mentioned.

For the Hellenistic period (fourth to second century), the epigraphic documentation covers the entire coast, from Arwad (Tartous) in the north to Umm el-ʿAmed in the south. Curiously, Tyre, as important as this city was in earlier periods, is best documented in the Hellenistic era. The latest known Phoenician inscription, from Arwad, is dated to 25 BCE. Its highly atypical character, in regard to both language and script, suggests that by that time the public usage of Phoenician for display inscriptions was no longer practiced. The Phoenician graffito inscribed in Greek characters from the Wasta cave near Tyre is consistent with such a scenario.

Anatolia

Perhaps owing to reasons linked with cultural prestige, Phoenician was employed outside of the heartland at a relatively early date in Cilicia for monumental display purposes, and this epigraphic habit would continue in subsequent centuries during the first half of the first millennium BCE. In the mid-ninth century, for example, Kilamuwa, the Luwian king of Sam'al (modern Zincirli), used Phoenician for his royal monuments, despite the fact that in all probability few if any residents of his kingdom actually spoke Phoenician. Later monarchs would use a local form of Aramaic for this purpose, and finally, standard Old Aramaic. During the eighth century Phoenician came to be used alongside Luwian in bilingual royal monuments in this same region; such Phoenician–Luwian bilinguals are known from Çineköy, Ivriz, Incirli, and above all Karatape, the site that has furnished the longest Phoenician (and Luwian) inscription known to date, and moreover provided the basis for the decipherment of the latter. Phoenician monuments are known from the seventh and sixth centuries as well, not only farther to the west, from Cebelireis Dağı near Antalya for example, but also to the southeast, from inland northern Syria (historically "Aramaic" territory), from Karkemish and (probably) Aleppo, for example.

Mesopotamia

Phoenician epigraphy is only poorly attested in Mesopotamia, mainly in the form of small objects transported there probably either by soldiers of the Assyrian army (small ivory box from Ur) or by Phoenician artisans employed for the construction of Assyrian palaces (seal of ʿAbdibaʿl found in Khorsabad).

Egypt

From Egypt, Phoenician inscriptions are also only very sporadically attested (Egyptian monuments with dedicatory inscriptions from Memphis, Abydos, etc.), no doubt emanating from Phoenician speaking people living there. The privileged climatic conditions there have also led to the occasional preservation of fragmentary Phoenician papyri. Two such documents are known, both letters. This lends them a certain importance grammatically and lexically, since they contain second person forms for example, and other features generally absent from monumental inscriptions.

Cyprus

A "Phoenician" kingdom was founded in the early first millennium BCE, perhaps as early as the ninth century, on the eastern coast of the island of Cyprus, around the city of Kition. This kingdom expanded and thrived, both politically and economically, especially in the Persian (sixth to fourth centuries) and Hellenistic (fourth to second centuries) periods, eventually incorporating neighboring kingdoms such as Idalion into its sphere of direct control. Other Phoenician settlements are also known, at Amathus, Paphos and Lapethos, for example. This political and cultural background explains, perhaps, how it is that in terms of sheer numbers, it is Cyprus that has provided by far the greatest number of Phoenician inscriptions for the entire Eastern Mediterranean area, the heartland included. Ongoing excavations at the site of Idalion have yielded a sizable archive of administrative documents from the Persian period, a very important find since (contrary to the majority of the Phoenician corpus) it is not monumental in character, and thus better reflects the banal concerns of everyday life.

Eastern Mediterranean

A bronze bowl bearing a Phoenician inscription from a funerary context in Crete (Tekke, tenth century) perhaps reflects the elite exchange of luxury items, as illustrated in Homeric poetry. Scattered Phoenician inscriptions from Late Classical and Hellenistic periods (fourth to third centuries) are also known from various other maritime cities of the Greek world (Rhodes, Cos, Delos, Rhenea, Athens, Pirea, Demetrias in Thessaly, etc.). These are mostly private monuments, largely funerary, sponsored by wealthy Phoenician expatriate families residing there.

Western Mediterranean

Phoenician expansion in the Western Mediterranean began early in the first millennium BCE, fueled by the search for metals. In this commercial context, Phoenician sailors and

merchants left written documents, both display and banal inscriptions from daily life. Over the course of time, the entire Western Mediterranean came to be integrated within the Carthaginian sphere of influence and domination, observable through a graphic shift from Phoenician to Punic.

Malta and its smaller neighbor Gozo are the compulsory stopover between the Eastern and Western Mediterranean. Beginning in the seventh and sixth centuries votive Phoenician stelae were erected, and as late as the second centuries BCE two identical *cippi* with bilingual inscriptions were being offered by two Tyrian brothers (incidentally, these turned out to be instrumental in the eighteenth century decipherment of Phoenician). Other inscriptions – funerary, dedicatory, or ceramic epigraphs – are attested in Punic, as well as a long but fragmentary official inscription commemorating the renovations of three temples sponsored by the Gozo authorities. Some very fragmentary Neo-Punic inscriptions are also known from Malta.

In Sicily, votive and funerary inscriptions are attested, as well as ceramic epigraphs from the Punic period, the majority naturally coming from the Western part of the island, then under Punic rule. Very few Neo-Punic inscriptions are known.

Sardinia was a major center of Phoenician and Punic settlement, owing to its wealth from local silver mines. The oldest inscription, a monumental stele with eight lines dating plausibly to the eighth century, is still of disputed interpretation, even though clearly legible. The island preserves numerous Punic inscriptions, both votive and funerary, but also those commemorating the construction of temples, with mention of the local authorities who were responsible. There are also several Neo-Punic inscriptions, one of which may have been written as late as the third century CE, thus being one of the latest Neo-Punic inscriptions known.

Few inscriptions have been found in mainland Italy, of which the most interesting, from Pyrgi, is inscribed on a small golden plaque which was part of a set of three: one in Punic and the two others in Etruscan. It is the dedication of a sanctuary to the goddess ʻAshtart by the Etruscan king of Caere around 500 BCE in the context of an alliance with Carthage.

Fragmentary inscriptions are known from Spain as early as the eighth century BCE (Cadix), as well as in Southern Portugal, from coastal *comptoirs*. Phoenician, Punic, and Neo-Punic epigraphic data from Ibiza in the Baleares islands also suggest an important presence there.

Carthage

The oldest inscription from Carthage is an inscribed gold pendant, an ex-voto to ʻAshtart and Pygmalion (end of the eighth century BCE). It was found in a tomb, and it could have been manufactured at Carthage or elsewhere. By far the largest group of inscriptions in Phoenician–Punic language comes from Carthage. The corpus includes several thousands of documents, although of a very repetitive and stereotyped nature. The main series is formed by ex-votos from the so-called tophet, dedicated to Tinnit "Face-of-Baal" and to Baal Ḥammon. Variations occur almost only in the names of the dedicants, along with the occasional mention of a charge or occupation. Hundreds of funerary inscriptions were also excavated which shed light on the local urban elites in the last centuries of its history. There are also a few texts commemorating public constructions, which mention, as

eponyms, city magistrates as well as the architects and supervisors in charge of the work. Punic epigraphy disappears with the conquest of Carthage by Rome in 149 BCE.

North Africa

Similar votive and funerary inscriptions were discovered elsewhere in Tunisia (e.g. Sousse, Dougga), and at Constantine in Algeria. Evidence of the use of Phoenician script is also found in the form of makers' or owners' marks on ceramics, a practice also attested in Algeria and even as far as Morocco (island of Mogador), where they can be attributed to the seventh and sixth century BCE. In Western Tunisia and Eastern Algeria, Punic epigraphy survived the fall of Carthage, in a form influenced graphically by contemporary cursive script. This corpus is also interesting graphically and linguistically, since it shows a much greater use of *matres lectionis* to indicate vowels. The same Neo-Punic script also developed in Libya.

Language Contact

The Phoenician heartland had always been a place of cultural contact, where both Egyptian and Akkadian, for example, had long been known and used. Commercial expansion, as well as continued domination under successive Mesopotamian imperial powers (and the deportations which resulted), also put the language in direct relation with many others, not only in Phoenicia proper, but also throughout the entire Near East and Mediterranean basin.

Phoenician and Egyptian

Phoenician commercial ties with pharaonic Egypt are both very ancient and quite persistent, and are clearly visible not only on the level of material culture and monumental art, but also in certain chapters of the coast's "graphic history" (cf. the so-called pseudo-hieroglyphic corpus). The Late Bronze age and early Iron Age probably represent the apogee of this period of intense contacts, which became more moderate under Assyrian imperial domination. On the strictly linguistic level, contacts with Egypt are (curiously, perhaps) less perceptible in the written record, being limited to a handful of proper names constructed on Phoenician models but containing Egyptian divine names, especially frequent in the Hellenistic period.

Phoenician and Akkadian

Already in the Late Bronze age, the chancelleries of Egyptian pharaohs of the New Kingdom conducted their international correspondence in the then-current graphic-linguistic *koine*: the pairing of the Mesopotamian cuneiform script with a somewhat simplified "international" version of the Babylonian language. This diplomatic situation dramatically affected the nature of Phoenician contact with Akkadian, since the scribes of Byblos, Beirut, Tyre, Sidon and other cities had thus to learn both script and language in

artificial scholastic settings, which entailed a concomitant limited mastery of both. Such a situation is nevertheless advantageous for modern students of the history of Phoenician, however, since these "unusual" spellings and morphological patterns employed by Phoenician scribes writing in cuneiform often reveal facts about the otherwise undocumented Phoenician substrate in the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries BCE. Another window for assessing contacts between Phoenician and Akkadian comes in the form of Phoenician personal names mentioned in Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions or administrative documents (ninth to seventh centuries BCE). Though rich, these data are yet also elusive, for at least two reasons. In the first place, the royal names are sometimes simply traditional "Amorite" names, maintained as dynastic names by tradition, and not necessarily pertinent for contemporary trends in non-royal Phoenician onomastics. Secondly, sometimes the Assyrian graphic rendering of these Phoenician names shows signs of having been distorted through contemporary Assyrian phonological and morphological "filters" (for example, in regard to anaptyxis, or the progressive transfer of segment length from a long vowel to a following consonant). Illustrating both phenomena, cf. the writing *ḫi-ru-um-mu* for *Ḥirōm. This means that such transliterations provide only indirect, and not direct access to the underlying pronunciation.

Phoenician and Ugaritic

The presence of a few locally written texts in the 22-sign (usually sinistrograde) cuneiform alphabet at Ugarit (which is poorly adapted to Ugaritic phonology, and probably better reflects the phonology of a southern "Canaanite" language such as Phoenician) suggests the likelihood that contacts between that kingdom and the Phoenician city-states to the south extended to certain forms of graphic exchange already in the thirteenth century BCE. Linguistic contact is also documented for the thirteenth century BCE, both in the form of phonological changes (the "Canaanite shift" was already operative in the thirteenth century Phoenicia, but not north of the ʿAkkār plain) and lexical contact (cf. the word **gišm-* for "rainstorm" in a letter – in Ugaritic language and script – from the king of Byblos to the king of Ugarit).

Phoenician and other Canaanite Languages

One of the oldest known inscriptions in the linear alphabet, an agricultural calendar from Gezer, dates plausibly to the tenth century BCE. Though often considered to be written in Hebrew, on the basis of 1 Kings 9:16 which affirms that the town of Gezer was given to Solomon by the Egyptian Pharaoh, the calendar bears only one clear diagnostic linguistic marker: the apparent reduction of the diphthong *ay (the word "summer" written as QṢ <*qeṣ*> where Hebrew should have had QYṢ <*qayṣ*>) shows that the language is more coherently characterized as being Phoenician. This same phenomenon is also attested in another inscription from the "Philistine" region, from Ekron, in which the word for "house" is written BT as it is in Phoenician, and not BYT as in Judean Hebrew. This last inscription also shows formula very close to those known in Old Byblian, which suggests the possibility that the "Phoenician" language was used extensively all along the coast, and it had also been adopted by Philistine rulers. A good number of them bearing perfectly good "Phoenician" names, incidentally, are mentioned in Assyrian annals.

It has sometimes been argued that Northern Hebrew, as attested mainly in the ostraca found in Samaria, was in fact Phoenician. While some isoglosses with Phoenician are observable, such as the form ŠT for "year" (instead of ŠNT), other characteristics nevertheless link this dialect more securely within southern (Judean) Hebrew. It would appear that Phoenician was the language of the coast, and Hebrew that of the hills.

Phoenician and Luwian

As already mentioned, Phoenician language and script were very present in Cilicia: several bilingual Luwian–Phoenician inscriptions are known, but also some unilingual ones. This is all the more striking since the political context and the onomasticon are entirely local. Such a situation is best explained through the prestige of the Phoenician alphabet brought there by merchants.

Incidentally, one current hypothesis for the transmission of the alphabet to the Greek world supposes a Phrygian intermediary, which implies an Anatolian (and thus) overland route, rather than a maritime one (directly from Phoenicia proper). If we entertain the overland hypothesis, the possibilities would include a Phoenician origin, but also an Aramaic one.

Phoenician and Aramaic

Phoenician and Aramaic are both Semitic languages, structurally related to one another, and having a considerable portion of shared vocabulary. The question of mutual comprehensibility must be left open, as well as the precise definition of the geographical frontier between the two language areas. In the absence of written evidence, it is difficult to know, for example, what language was being spoken in the Beqa' during the first millennium BCE. These two languages were both being written in the ninth century BCE with the very same alphabet, which began to differentiate only in the eighth century BCE. Aramaic was more largely diffused, owing to the deportation policies of the Assyrians, and even became an international language, used to a certain extent by the Assyrian administration (2 Kings 18:26; cf. the Aramaic juridical tablets), and above all in the Persian Achaemenid Empire (sixth to fourth centuries BCE). Some Phoenician inscriptions show words and expressions that can be best explained through Aramaic, and yet it is difficult to say whether they are Aramaisms or simply seem to be such since Aramaic is much better attested than Phoenician. What appears to be an Aramaism may simply be a hapax in Phoenician, since the Phoenician lexicon is still so poorly known. Aramaic expanded in Hellenistic times to Phoenician speaking regions, as exemplified by an Iturean Aramaic inscription found near Yanouḥ in the mountains behind Byblos, and the spread of Aramaic personal names in Phoenician cities in Roman times.

Phoenician and Greek

Links between Phoenician and Greek had already been recognized early on by Greek authors themselves, as a debt owed to them in the elaboration of the Greek alphabet, whose origins were thought to be Phoenician. This took the form of the legend linked with Cadmos, who travelled to Greece in search of his sister Europe, abducted by Zeus,

and thereby offered the Greeks the alphabetical script. This legend was adopted by the Phoenicians themselves, probably in Hellenistic times, and is illustrated in the Roman period on Sidonian coins.

In Cyprus, interaction between Greek and Phoenician flourished upon a local substrate language conventionally called Eteocypriot, which had its own script. Local Greek speakers adopted a form of this script, and thus left Greek inscriptions written with this local syllabic script, a practice that would be later superseded by the alphabetic Greek script. The long co-existence of Greek and Phoenician speaking communities in Cyprus explains the presence of bilingual inscriptions, in which the Greek version may be written either in syllabic or in alphabetic script, for example at Idalion.

Phoenician merchants of the early Hellenistic period (fourth to second centuries BCE) left inscriptions in Phoenician, or more often bilingual, in the Aegean and Greece (Rhodes, Delos, Rhenea, Cos, Athens, Pirea, Demetrias in Thessaly). In the Phoenician heartland, however, people were then writing only monolingual inscriptions, either in Greek or in Phoenician. The only bilingual known from Phoenicia proper – from Arwad, and dated to 25 BCE – is the latest known dated inscription in Phoenician, and it shows unconventional characteristics which suggest that Phoenician writing was probably no longer in use, and that this monument was engraved for the purpose of affirming local identity. Interaction between Greek and Phoenician is also visible through some Phoenician or Punic inscriptions written in Greek characters known from these late periods (graffito of the Wasta cave from the region of Tyre; 3 votive inscriptions from El Hofra in Algeria).

Another window for assessing Punic–Greek contact comes in the form of the set of "glosses" accumulated in the Late Antique manuscript tradition of Dioscorides' *Materia medica*, consisting of transcriptions into Greek characters of various plant names, labelled "African" in the gloss, but recognizably Punic (or Phoenician): for example αλσουναλφ for **lašōn-ʾalp*, "tongue-of-ox".

Phoenician and Iberian

The presence of Phoenicians in Spain had a strong influence on the local culture in Spain as a stimulus to the emergence of the so-called Tartessian culture. Phoenician script was the basis for the apparition of the first local scripts, used for writing local languages around the eighth to seventh centuries BCE in Andalusia and Southern Portugal. These Iberic scripts combine alphabetic and syllabic characters.

Punic and Latin

The Latin author Plautus (third to second centuries BCE) wrote comedies for theater, among which *Poenulus* "The little Punic man". The protagonist pronounces a series of speeches, which have been recognized as genuine transcriptions of oral Punic as such could have been heard in the time of Plautus. These passages provide a precious witness to the spirantization of some consonants (bgdkpt), for example, as well as for the vocalization of Punic, at least in his time.

After the destruction of Carthage and the Roman conquest of North Africa, Latin inscriptions developed while Punic was still being used. As already mentioned, a new form

of script, Neo-Punic, appeared, which derived from Punic cursive script. Probably under Latin influence, vowels came to be noted more regularly through *matres lectionis*. Bilingual inscriptions were engraved, some of which show the introduction of new expressions into Punic intended to designate Roman institutions. This is particularly evident in Tripolitania where Punic was not written before this period. Calques, such as RB MḤNT TḤT RB MḤNT "chief of army under the chief of army" as equivalent of Latin *proconsul*, are testimony to this interaction. Some inscriptions in the Punic language but in Latin script are also known, dating roughly from the first to fourth centuries CE, the latest of these being in a Christian context (Sirte).

Saint Augustine (fourth to fifth centuries CE) also alludes in some of his writings to certain words, showing that at his time the Punic language was not a dead language. Even if he himself was unable to speak Punic fluently, and even if many people in Hippona would not have understood it, there were nevertheless others, mainly in the countryside, who were still speaking Punic in daily life and thus in need of a Punic speaking clergy. He cites several Punic words, such as *ilim* for "God", which he distinguishes from *elōhīm* in Biblical Hebrew.

Punic and Libyan

Finally, more than a thousand "Libyan" inscriptions are known, written with a distinctive alphabet and in a language (or languages) whose relationship with modern Berber languages remain unclear, provide testimony to the continued use of local languages after the fall of Carthage, and in distinct regions such as Numidia. These local languages were in contact with Punic, as shown by the presence of bilingual inscriptions (such as those of Dougga, KAI 100–101, one of which is dated in the tenth year of Micipsa, that is, 139–138 BCE). Most of these inscriptions are in fact from the Numidian region in Western Tunisia (the Maktar region) or in Eastern Algeria. Others are known from Tripolitania as far West as Morocco, thus covering the whole area of distribution of Punic inscriptions.

Sketch of Phoenician Grammar

Confronting the available comparative data – and especially those from Hebrew, which was genetically quite close to Phoenician, but also those from Ugaritic and Arabic – with the internal evidence derived from the Phoenician corpus itself allows for a plausible and reasonably solid reconstruction of the principal features of the phonology and morphology of Phoenician. Our knowledge of Phoenician syntax and lexicon, however, is less complete.

Phoenician Phonology

Consonants

As mentioned above, throughout its history Phoenician, like Hebrew and Aramaic, employed the 22-sign Northwest Semitic alphabet. Since this alphabet had already emerged in the second millennium BCE, one cannot be absolutely certain that this

22-sign inventory corresponded perfectly to the consonantal phonology of first millennium spoken Phoenician. Nevertheless, this very assumption – and it is a considerable one – is adopted here for convenience (Table 16.1).

Obviously, given the defective nature of the textual sources (not only those in Phoenician script, but also the occasional transcriptions of Phoenician names and words in Assyrian, Greek and Latin script), beyond indicating their etymological reflexes, it is difficult, if not impossible, to specify the exact phonetic shape of these consonantal phonemes (some proposals, in IPA, are nevertheless proposed in square brackets), to say nothing of their conditioned or unconditioned allophones, which might have existed in spoken Phoenician over the course of the first millennium BCE. As in many other Semitic languages, the Phoenician phonemic inventory included a tripartite series of contrastive articulations: voiced, voiceless and the so-called "emphatic" (perhaps ejective?) articulation, for certain stops and fricatives (and probably also affricates, assuming that these still existed in first millennium Phoenician). See Table 16.1.

Working with the assumption of a complete correspondence between the 22-sign Proto-Canaanite alphabet and the Phoenician consonantal inventory, evoked above, the subsequent study of the Phoenician inherited lexicon then allows for the recognition of several mergers which must have taken place in Phoenician with respect to the consonantal inventory generally reconstructed for Proto-Semitic. With a few minor exceptions, these are by and large the same as those postulated for Hebrew. As in Ugaritic, for example, the Proto-Semitic lateral series did not survive as such in Phoenician, but instead the voiceless and "emphatic" laterals had merged in Proto-Northwest Semitic with adjacent alveolar phonemes. Furthermore, as in Hebrew but unlike Ugaritic, the Proto-Semitic interdental series and the two velar-fricatives were also eliminated in Phoenician; they merged, respectively, with adjacent alveolar and pharyngeal phonemes (Table 16.2).

Table 16.1 Phoenician consonants (traditional transcription in italics, hypothetical IPA values in square brackets).

	Bilabial	*Dental*	*Alveolar*	*Lateral/palatal*	*Velar/pharyngeal*	*Glottal*
Stops	*p*	*t*			*k*	*ʾ* [ʔ]
Voiceless						
Voiced	*b*	*d*			*g*	
"Emphatic"		*ṭ* [tˀ]			*q* [kˀ]	
Fricatives			*š* [sʲ]	*l*	*ḥ* [ħ]	*h*
Voiceless						
Voiced					*ʿ* [ʕ]	
"Emphatic"						
Affricates			*s* [ʦʲ]			
Voiceless						
Voiced			*z* [ʣʲ]			
"Emphatic"			*ṣ* [ʦˀ]			
Approximants	*w*		*r*	*y*		
Nasals	*m*	*n*				

Table 16.2 The Proto-Semitic lateral, interdental, and velar-fricative series, and their presumed reflexes in Phoenician.

	Proto-Semitic (hypothetical)	*phonemic reflex (hypothetical)*		*Phoen. traditional transcription*
laterals	*ɬ	→	[l]	*l*
	*ɬ	merged with	[s²]	*š*
	*ɬ’	merged with	[ʦ’²]	*ṣ*
interdentals	*ð	merged with	[ʣ]	*z*
	*θ	merged with	[s²]	*š*
	*θ’	merged with	[ʦ’²]	*ṣ*
velar-fricatives	*ɣ	merged with	[ʕ]	*ʿ*
	*x	merged with	[ħ]	*ḥ*

Vowels

Since vowels are not represented in the writing system, these must be reconstructed on the basis of two convergent lines of evidence: comparative data drawn from regularities observable in other (ideally closely related) Semitic languages, and the occasional transcription of Phoenician names and words in other writing systems (Mesopotamian or Cypriote syllabic scripts, Greek or Latin alphabets) in which vowels are represented graphically. The latter are notoriously difficult to control with any precision, since they often derive from proper names, and names do not necessarily obey the same phonological rules as other kinds of words, and since the foreign writing systems just mentioned were not necessarily adapted for the accurate representation of Phoenician vowels. While retaining an awareness of these incommodities, we may nevertheless attempt an educated guess regarding the Phoenician vocalic inventory (Table 16.3).

Vocalic length probably remained phonemic throughout the first millennium BCE. In other words, we may plausibly assume that native speakers would discern a contrast for minimal pairs such as *ʾiš* “fire” and *ʾīš* “man”, for example. Historical long /ā/ underwent an unconditioned shift to /ō/ already in the mid-second millennium BCE throughout the southern Levant in general; this development, the so-called “Canaanite shift” was thus also inherited in first millennium Phoenician. Some etymological short vowels seem to have developed conditioned allophones in certain syllabic or stress-related environments. When immediately followed by etymological *y* or *w* in syllable-final position, short *a* developed two conditioned allophones in Phoenician as in Ugaritic: the diphthongs *ay* and *aw* resolved to *ê* (< **ay*) and *ô* (< **aw*), respectively. Historical short /i/ also appears

Table 16.3 A plausible reconstruction of the Phoenician vowel phonemes.

	front		*back*
high	i, ī		u, ū
		e *or* ɛ, ê	ɔ *or* o, ō, ô
low		a	

to have been lowered and backed to something like /ɛ/ or /e/ in at least some syllabic or stress environments, and historical short /a/ was apparently occasionally raised and backed to something like /o/ or /ɔ/ as well. It is uncertain whether or not this vowel /o/ or /ɔ/ (resulting from the raising and backing of historical short /a/) and the vowel /ō/ (resulting from the Canaanite shift) were audibly contrastive by timber (for example, /ɔ/ versus /o/, respectively), by length (for example, /o/ versus /ō/, respectively), or had instead merged as a single vocalic phoneme (for example, /ō/). It is equally conceivable that the shifts described above "pushed" the vowel /ō/ (resulting from the Canaanite shift) even farther back, to /ū/, as implied by the form *sufes* in Latin (cf. biblical *šōpʰeṭ*). In latter periods, perhaps even as early as the Hellenistic or Roman periods, some etymologically short vowels may already have begun reducing (to /ø/ or *"shewa"*) in certain circumstances.

Phoenician Morphology

Inasmuch as the sources, both internal and comparative, are able to reveal such things, the major structuring principles of Phoenician morphology appear to be very similar to those, better known, of biblical Hebrew. As with other languages of the Semitic family, it is traditional to distinguish three related but distinct morphological systems for Phoenician; for nouns, verbs, and particles, respectively.

Nominal Morphology

Phoenician nominal morphology may be conveniently described as bipartite and sequential: a "nominal base" is followed by a "grammatical suffix" (always in that order). The nominal base conveys specific semantic content, while the grammatical suffix expresses the accordable semantic and syntactic nuances of number, gender, and state. Only vestigial remnants of the Semitic case system survive in Phoenician.

Nominal Bases

For nominal bases, in turn, two formative constituents may be distinguished: on the one hand, a bilateral or triliteral consonantal "root", often linked with a particular broad semantic field, and on the other, an internal vowel sequence or "noun pattern" which refines or specifies the basic semantics of the consonantal root. These two elements are non-sequential, combining through Ablaut. For example, for the identically written substantives *yrḥ* "moon" (probably pronounced something like **yarḥ* in the early first millennium) and *yrḥ* "month" (probably **yariḥ*), one would identify their common "root" YRḤ, but distinguish (on the basis of comparative evidence) two different "noun patterns", QaTL and QaTiL, respectively.

As in other Semitic languages, nominal bases may be augmented by prefixes or suffixes, or both. These include prefixes such as *tv-*, *mv-* and others (where *v* is "any vowel"), and suffixes (not to be confused with the "grammatical suffixes" on which see below) such as *-iyy*, *-ūt*, *-ōn*, and others. Bases with the *tv-* prefix or the *-ūt* suffix often have abstract semantics,

those with the *mv-* prefix often refer to concrete entities, and those with the suffixes *-iyy* and *-ōn* may be adjectival, but these are merely tendencies, and many exceptions exist. Some nominal bases possess both prefixes and suffixes, such as *mmlkt* "royalty" → "ruler".

Grammatical Suffixes

Despite the ambiguity of the Phoenician writing system, it is probable that the grammatical suffixes pertinent for nominal morphology were similar to those of first millennium Hebrew (and especially northern Hebrew). As in Hebrew, these Phoenician grammatical suffixes are relatively few in number, and express in various ways the semantic and syntactic notions of gender, number, and state.

Phoenician possessed two grammatical genders, labelled for convenience "masculine" and "feminine". Only feminine nouns are morphologically marked, by means of the morpheme */-(a)t/*, which, owing to the presence of a consonant, can be overtly recognized in Phoenician orthography. Examples are *mlkt* "queen" (probably pronounced something like **malkɔt*) and *ʾḥt* "sister" (probably **ʾaḥōt*), both of which show a graphic trace of this "feminine" morpheme. Morphologically masculine nouns are unmarked (compare *mlk* "king" and *ʾḥ* "brother"), although some of these actually take feminine agreement, despite their morphologically "masculine" morphology (examples include *ʾrṣ* "earth" and *ʾm* "mother"). The inverse – morphologically feminine nouns which take masculine agreement – is apparently also attested (cf. *hmmlkt hʾ* "that ruler", where the demonstrative pronoun *hʾ* is plausibly masculine), but much less frequent. Indeed, for both categories it is much more frequent for agreement to follow explicitly the morphological gender.

Phoenician probably had three productive numbers (singular, dual and plural). The dual and the plural would have been distinguishable by vowel quality: *-ī(m)* and *-ōt* marked the plural, and *-ê(m)* the dual, although this distinction may have fallen out of use in certain forms already in the early first millennium (see the following paragraph, on state). The singular (like the masculine gender discussed above) remained unmarked.

For the dual and plural – but not for the singular – and only in the case of masculine forms, nouns that are "bound" to a following genitive are distinguished morphologically from those that are "unbound" (that is, not bound to a following genitive). Unbound nouns are said to be in the "absolute" state, and bound nouns in the "construct" state. Pronominal suffixes are attached to nouns in the bound state. Only the unbound or absolute state is overtly marked: by means of the consonantal morpheme */m/* which appears after the vocalic grammatical suffix of the masculine plural or dual. Table 16.4 illustrates how these three categories of gender, number and state combine to form the grammatical suffixes generally reconstructed for Phoenician.

Of the Semitic case system, only frozen vestiges remain, visible for example in certain forms with suffixed pronouns.

Verbal Morphology

As with nouns, Phoenician verbal morphology resembles nominal morphology to the extent that it consists of two discrete components: a "verbal base" (consonantal root and a vowel pattern), and a set of "grammatical affixes". As indicated by the use of the word "affixes", verbal morphology is unlike nominal morphology (which employs only

Table 16.4 The markings of the nominal inflection in Phoenician, shown using the (unchanging) nominal base ***sōpir*** "scribe" as a placeholder example.

Nouns in the syntactically "unbound" or "absolute" state		
	vocalization (hypothetical)	*example in writing*
singular		
masc.	*sōpir*=**ø**	*spr*
fem.	*sōpir*=(**ɔ**)**t**	*spr**t***
dual		
masc.	*sōpir*=**êm**	*spr**m***
fem.	*sōpir*=(**ɔ**)**têm**	*spr**tm***
plural		
masc.	*sōpir*=**īm**	*spr**m***
fem.	*sōpir*=**ōt** (poss. becoming *sōpir*=**ūt**)	*spr**t***
Nouns in the syntactically "bound" or "construct" state (where different from above):		
singular dual	(same as unbound)	
masc.	*sōpir*=**ê**	*spr*
fem.	*sōpir*=(**ɔ**)**tê**	*spr**t***
plural		
masc.	*sōpir*=**ī** (poss. becoming *sōpir*=**ê**)	*spr*
fem.	(same as unbound)	

grammatical suffixes) in showing a combined distribution of these affixes with respect to the verbal base as both (and mostly) suffixes along with (occasional) prefixes.

Verbal morphology also differs from nominal with respect to the kinds of grammatical information conveyed by these affixes. The following grammatical categories are distinguished by such affixes in Phoenician: gender (masculine, feminine), number (singular, dual, plural), and "person" (with respect to the verb's grammatical subject). Three categories of person are used: first, second and third.

Verbal Bases

Like other Northwest Semitic languages and Arabic, Phoenician inherited two verbal conjugations, and each of these possesses its own morphological characteristics. These are here called the "suffixing conjugation" (or SC), and the "prefixing conjugation" (or PC). In the SC, the grammatical affixes are always suffixes, but in the PC they show a combined distribution of both prefixes and suffixes.

The Suffixing Conjugation

Even though the SC evolved historically from an earlier "stative" conjugation, and even if genuine stative manifestations continued to exist in Phoenician, it would nevertheless appear that, apart from stative verbs, the SC in Phoenician served most frequently as a tense, marking action having occurred in the past. Some statistically less frequent semantic

Table 16.5 The suffixing conjugation in Phoenician, with the verb KTB "to write" as a placeholder.

	Vocalization (hypothetical)	*example in writing*
singular		
3ms	*katɔb*=**ø** (earlier *katab*=**a**ʾ)	*ktb*
3fs	*katab*=**ɔ** (earlier *katab*=**ɔt**)	*ktb* (*ktb**t***)
2ms	*katab*=**ta**	*ktb**t***
2fs	*katab*=**t** (earlier *katab*=**ti**ʾ)	*ktb**t***
1cs	*katab*=**ti**	*ktb**t***
plural		
3mp	*katab*=**u**	*ktb*
3fp	*(unattested)* (perhaps *katab*=**u**ʾ as 3mp)	
2mp	*(unattested)* (perhaps *katab*=**tim**ʾ)	
2fp	*(unattested)* (perhaps *katab*=**tin**ʾ)	
1cs	*katab*=**nu**	*ktb**n***

usages of the SC are also possibly attested; in general parallels for these may be found in first millennium Hebrew. Table 16.5 shows the Phoenician SC as generally reconstructed. No forms are proposed for the dual; one may assume, on the analogy of Hebrew, that the historical dual forms had fallen out of use, and had merged with their plural counterparts.

The Prefixing Conjugation

As in other Semitic languages, the PC in Phoenician covered a broader range of semantic functions than the SC. It is plausible that at least two morphologically distinct "moods" had survived: a long form, often called the indicative, used aspectually to mark durativity or as a tense to express present and future action, and a short form, used modally to mark a speaker's volition. In practical terms, however, these two historical moods of the PC are indistinguishable in writing, with the possible exception of the 3mp (see Table 16.6 below). As above with the SC, the historical dual forms had in all probability fallen out of usage in 1st millennium Phoenician, and merged with their plural counterparts. Finally, since the imperative is formally related to the PC, it too is presented under this rubric (see below, Table 16.7).

The Imperative

As elsewhere in Semitic, the imperative (Table 16.7) exists only for the second person in Phoenician; gender and number are marked exclusively through suffixes, but these suffixes show an affinity with those found elsewhere for the PC. Moreover, since these suffixes are almost entirely vocalic, almost virtually no graphic representations of the imperative are distinctly marked for number and gender. Finally, as in Hebrew, there may well have been two historically distinct forms of the 2ms form; and as elsewhere in the PC, the historical dual forms had probably fallen out of usage in first millennium Phoenician.

Table 16.6 The prefixing conjugation in Phoenician, with the verb KTB "to write" as a placeholder.

		vocalization (hypothetical)	*example in writing*
singular			
3ms		**y**=*aktub*=**ø**	***y****ktb*
3fs		**t**=*aktub*=**ø**	***t****ktb*
2ms		**t**=*aktub*=**ø**	***t****ktb*
2fs	long	*(unattested)* (perhaps **t**=*aktub*=**īn**	
	short	**t**=*aktub*=**ī**	***t****ktb*
1cs		**ʾ**=*aktub*=**ø**	***ʾ****ktb*
plural			
3mp	long	**y**=*aktub*=**ūn**	***y****ktb****n***
	short	**y**=*aktub*=**ū**	***y****ktb*
3fp		*(unattested)* (perhaps **y**=*aktub*=**na**)	
2mp	long	**t**=*aktub*=**ūn**	***t****ktb****n***
	short	**t**=*aktub*=**ū**	***t****ktb*
2fp		*(unattested)* (perhaps **t**=*aktub*=**na**)	
1cp		**n**=*aktub*=**ø**	***n****ktb*

Table 16.7 The imperative in Phoenician, with the verb KTB "to write" as a placeholder.

	Vocalization (hypothetical)	*example in writing*
singular		
2ms	*kutub*=**ø** and *kutub*=**a**	*ktb*
2fs	*kutub*=**ī**	*ktb*
plural		
2mp	*kutub*=**ū**	*ktb*
2fp	*(unattested)* (perhaps *kutub*=**na**)	

Verbal Adjectives, Verbal Nouns

Phoenician also possessed verbal adjectives and verbal nouns. While these obey the principles of nominal (and not verbal) morphology (in terms of grammatical suffixes for example, and in not being overtly marked for person), they should nevertheless be mentioned here, since they do share certain (especially syntactic) features with verbs.

Verbal nouns are also called infinitives; their nominal base is largely a function of the verbal stem (see below) to which they belong. Verbal adjectives, also called participles, are often used substantivally as in related Semitic languages. Their nominal base is also largely a function of the verbal stem to which they belong; transitive verbs may have two morphologically different participles, one active and one passive.

Verbal Stems

The morphology of verbal bases in Phoenician varied as a function of the specific verbal "stem" used for expressing a given meaning. Four such principle stems may be identified

Table 16.8 Hypothetical reconstruction of the verbal bases of the principle stems in Phoenician, with the dummy verb QTL.

	SC	*PC*	*imperative*	*participle*	*infinitive*
G	QaTaL- QaTiL-	-aQTuL- -iQTaL- -aQTiL-	QuTuL- QaTaL- QiTiL-	QōTiL-	(often) QaTōL-
D	QiTTiL-	-aQaTTiL-	QaTTiL-	maQaTTiL-	QaTTōL-
Y	yiQTiL-	-aQTiL-	yiQTiL-	maQTiL-	yaQTōL-
N	naQTaL-	-iQQaTiL-	ʾiQQaTiL-	naQTaL-	naQTōL-

for Phoenician; these are traditionally (and here) abbreviated G, D, Y, and N. Each of these stems may be loosely associated with certain semantics, though there is much variation. The semantics of G-stem nouns vary greatly, for example, from stative or intransitive (verbs of movement) to transitive. D-stem verbs are usually transitive, often with intensive or factitive meaning (with respect to the G-stem meaning). The Y-stem corresponds to the Hebrew *hiphil*; it is transitive (often doubly so), and often causative in meaning. Finally, the N-stem is used for passives or for agentless action. Table 16.8 presents hypothetical proposals for the verbal bases of the various conjugations and other verbal forms in the principle stems in Phoenician.

Judging from certain contexts, where only a passive meaning makes sense, these three active stems (G, D, Y) probably also possessed internal passives, as in biblical Hebrew: Gp, Dp, and Yp, respectively, which would have been distinguished from their active counterparts by Ablaut (in all probability, by the presence of a short *u* vowel). Furthermore, in addition to the internal passives and the N-stem, verbs with passive, reciprocal or reflexive meaning could probably also have been expressed in Phoenician with the series of derived stems containing a *-ta-* infix. This infix would have been placed either before or after the first root consonant of the verb (thus, the abbreviations Gt, tD and tY); but such forms are all quite rare and at all events difficult to vocalize, so merely their plausible existence is mentioned here.

All of the stem patterns mentioned above would have shown allomorphic variation for certain types of "weak" or otherwise irregular verbal roots.

Particle Morphology

The morphological structure of particles is sequential (rather than governed by Ablaut) in Phoenician, as in other Semitic languages. Pronouns are the most common type of particle encountered in Phoenician texts, but other types of particles are also well-attested.

Pronouns

The Phoenician pronominal system is somewhat conservative, and closely resembles that of Hebrew. Pronouns of various types existed: in addition to personal pronouns, one may mention impersonal, indefinite, interrogative and relative sets as well.

Personal Pronouns

Personal pronouns include both independent and suffixed forms. Independent forms (Table 16.9) usually – but not always – occur in a nominative context (that is, as the grammatical subject of the sentence). A formally distinct non-nominative paradigm must once have also existed in Proto-Phoenician, since a few isolated frozen forms have survived here and there (*hʾt*, *hmt*), but these are rare, and the oblique paradigm must have been absorbed into the nominative one early on in the first millennium. Whatever their origin, the independent personal pronouns are often used redundantly, that is, "for emphasis". No distinct dual forms of the independent pronouns seem to have survived in Phoenician.

For the paradigm of suffixed personal pronouns, reanalysis of earlier forms consisting of (old) case vowel + suffixed personal pronoun has produced a considerably heterogeneous paradigm for these forms for the first and second persons in Phoenician. Moreover, many of these forms continued to evolve diachronically, triggered by both phonological processes and by analogical leveling. The resulting "paradigm" is thus overly complex; Table 16.10 below provides what we hope is a plausible reconstruction.

Other Particles

The Phoenician demonstrative pronouns (and adjectives) greatly resemble related forms in Hebrew (and to a certain extent Aramaic and Arabic). Various indefinite, impersonal and interrogative pronouns are also attested in the corpus. Some of these have well-known cognates in better known sister or cousin languages, be they earlier, contemporary or latter. Cf. MY (perhaps **mî*) for "who" and M (perhaps **mō*) for "what", which contribute to both interrogative and indefinite series.

Phoenician and Punic attest many other types of particles beyond pronouns. Many of these are part of a substantial lexical inheritance from earlier forms of Proto-Northwest Semitic, and as such are fairly easy to recognize in comparative perspective. Where

Table 16.9 Reconstructed paradigm of the independent personal pronouns in Phoenician.

	Vocalization (hypothetical)	*example in writing*
singular		
3ms	**huʾa** (becoming **hû**)	**hʾ**
3fs	**hiʾa** (becoming **hî**)	**hʾ**
2ms	**ʾatta**	**ʾt**
2fs	**ʾatti**	**ʾt**
1cs	**ʾanōki**	**ʾnk**
plural		
3mp	**himūt** (replaced earlier ***hum**ʾ)	**hmt**
3fp	(same as 3mpʾ; replaced earlier ***hin**ʾ)	**hmt**
2ms	**ʾattim** (replaced ***ʾattum**ʾ)	**ʾtm**
2fp	*(unattested* — perhaps same as 3mp, **ʾattim**ʾ)	
1cp	**ʾanaḥnu**	**ʾnḥn**

Table 16.10 Reconstructed paradigm of the suffixed personal pronouns in Phoenician.

		Hypothetical vocalization	*example in writing*
singular			
3ms	on sg noun in acc.	**-ô** (< *****-aw, < earlier **-ahu**)	-ø
	on sg noun in nom.	**-ô** (same as above, by paradigm pressure)	-ø
	on sg noun in gen.	**-iyu** (< earlier **-ihu**, later becoming -iw→ **-im**)	**-y** (earlier **-h**, later **-m**)
	on pl noun in oblique	**-êyu** (< earlier **-êhu**, later becoming -êw→ **-êm**)	**-y** (earlier **-h**, later **-m**)
	on pl noun in nom.	**-êyu** (same as above, by paradigm pressure)	**-y** (earlier **-h**, later **-m**)
3fs	on sg noun in acc.	**-â** (< earlier **-aha**)	-ø
	on sg noun in nom.	**-â** (same as above, by paradigm pressure)	-ø
	on sg noun in gen.	**-iya** (< earlier **-iha**)	**-y** (earlier **-h**)
2ms		**-ka**	**-k**
2fs		**-ki**	**-k**
1cs	on sg noun in nom.	**-î** (< earlier *****-uya, analogical replacement[2])	-ø
	on sg noun in gen./acc.	**-iya** (later becoming -î, by analogy)	**-y**
	on pl noun in oblique	**-ay** (< earlier *****-ayya)	**-y**
	on pl noun in nom.	**-ay** (same as above, by paradigm pressure)	**-y**
plural			
3mp	on sq noun in acc.	**-om** (< *****-awm, < earlier *****-ahum)	**-m**
	on sg noun in nom.	**-om** (same as above, by paradigm pressure)	**-m**
	on sg noun in gen.	**-inom** (< **-i + nôm**, via reanalysis; earlier **-hum**)	**-nm** (earlier **-hm**)
	on pl noun in oblique	**-ênom** (< **-ê + nôm**, via reanalysis)	**-nm**
	on pl noun in nom.	**-ênom** (same as above, by paradigm pressure)	**-nm**
3fp	on sq noun in acc.	**-am** (analogy, based on 3mp and -o/-a in sg)	**-m**
	on sg noun in nom.	**-am** (same as above)	**-m**
	on sg noun in gen.	**-inam** (analogy, based on 3mp and -o/-a in sg)	**-nm** (earlier **-hm**)
	on pl noun in oblique	**-ênam** (analogy, based on 3mp and -o/-a in sg)	**-nm**
	on pl noun in nom.	**-ênam** (same as above)	**-nm**
2mp		**-kum** (later becoming -kom, by lowering)	**-km**
2fp		(*unattested* — perhaps **-kin**[2])	
1cp		**-nu**	**-n**

differences are observable, these are generally in usage or proportional distribution. The negative adverbial particle BL, for example, shows a much wider distribution in Phoenician than in Ugaritic or Hebrew.

Among common conjunctions, for example, one can cite the ubiquitous coordinator W- (*wa*), but also subordinating K- (*kî*). The inventory of prepositions is also conservative: most of the common West Semitic prepositions are attested in Phoenician and Punic, sometimes presenting variant or slightly evolved forms; for example, ʾB- "in" (B- with "prosthetic alif"), etc. Another tendency is prepositional compounding. This may be observed in the concretion of two (or more) originally independent prepositions into compound forms, as in LB- or LMB-, but also in idiomatic expressions subsequently lexicalized as prepositions (as in BD-, which is also attested in earlier periods).

Other particles, some unused or unknown in the second millennium come to play important roles on the grammatical or syntactic level in 1st millennium Phoenician; as above, these are generally comparable to the situation in biblical Hebrew. Cf. the definite article H-, and the *nota accusativi* ʾYT.

Lexicon

Our knowledge of the Phoenician and Punic lexicon is limited by the nature of the preserved corpus (see above, under Textual evidence). One important consequence of this situation is the frequency of encountering *hapax legomena* in inscriptions of an otherwise underrepresented or previously unknown nature or literary genre. For example, ongoing work on the Idalion administrative archive of the Persian period has recently allowed the identification of a "new" Phoenician word: KWT, a kind of container or volume measure, also known from the 2nd millennium.

Syntax

As above with regard to lexicon, our knowledge of Phoenician and Punic syntactic structure is highly limited by the nature of the corpus. In addition, some literary genres (such as *ex voto* inscriptions) consist of such conservative and highly stereotyped formulas that one may question whether such language perhaps reflects literary tradition more than contemporary speech patterns. Despite these drawbacks, certain general observations can be made, especially when such are reinforced through the presence of parallel patterns in biblical Hebrew or other closely related languages, as, for example, the preference for parataxis (rather than subordination).

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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Old and Imperial Aramaic

Christian Stadel

Introduction and Wider Perspective

Aramaic is the cover term for an extensive and diverse group of related languages and dialects (Huehnergard 1995). It belongs to the Western branch of the Semitic language family and together with Ugaritic, Hebrew, Phoenician, and some other Canaanite idioms constitutes the Northwest Semitic sub-group. Aramaic is attested since the tenth century BCE and is still spoken today by minority groups in the Middle East and in the Western diaspora, making it the Semitic language with the longest attested history. The modern designation "Aramaic" ultimately derives from a toponym "Aram" (and a related gentilic), associated with different regions in modern-day Syria, which is variously mentioned in cuneiform and Northwest Semitic sources from the second millennium BCE onward.

There exist different models for the periodization of the 3000 years of Aramaic language history. The various chronological, geographical, and social factors that shaped Aramaic are best accounted for in Klaus Beyer's model (Beyer 1984–2004, 1986; Gzella 2015, 45–52), with three main chronological phases. The first period (ca. tenth century BCE–third century CE) is characterized by the relatively homogeneous supra-regional literary languages Old Aramaic (ca. tenth to sixth century BCE) and Imperial Aramaic (ca. sixth to third century BCE); these are the dialects treated in more detail in the remainder of this chapter. The Imperial Aramaic standard continued to exert influence on the diverse regional forms of Aramaic that developed in Hellenistic and Roman times (until the third century CE), viz. the Aramaic of Qumran, Nabataean, Palmyrene Aramaic, Old Syriac, and the Aramaic of Hatra, all of which also show dialectal forms to a certain degree.

In the middle period (ca. third to tenth century CE), local spoken Aramaic dialects were promoted to literary languages in their own right: distinct Jewish, Samaritan, and Christian dialects emerged in Palestine and form the relatively conservative Western

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Aramaic dialect group. In southern Mesopotamia, Jews spoke and wrote in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, a dialect closely resembling the idiom of their gnostic neighbors, the Mandaeans. Literary Syriac, the language of eastern Christianity, holds an intermediary position between this innovative Eastern Aramaic group and the west, with a closer affiliation to the former. In contradistinction to the chancellery languages of the first period, which are attested in epigraphic remains, the dialects of the middle period reflect geographical as well as confessional boundaries and survive mainly in literary manuscripts, often of a religious nature.

The Islamic conquest changed the language situation in the Middle East dramatically. By the tenth century CE, Aramaic had lost its status as majority language and has been in steady decline ever since. Nowadays, it is spoken almost exclusively by religious minorities (Christians, Jews, Mandaeans), who managed to resist Arabization and Islamization in peripheral areas. These modern Neo-Aramaic vernaculars are very diverse and have undergone drastic changes, many of which were induced by contact with non-Semitic languages.

While most of the Aramaic dialects from the old and middle periods have distinct Aramaic scripts associated with them, all of these ultimately developed from a consonantal alphabet with 22 letters that was borrowed from the Phoenicians in the tenth century BCE to write the first Old Aramaic texts.

Historical Setting, Language Stages, Textual Evidence, and Text Types

After the Egyptian and Hittite empires lost grip of Syria–Palestine at the end of the Bronze Age, various ethnic and linguistic groups formed small independent regional states in the area. In western Syria, Aramaic tribes founded the city-states of Damascus, Hamath, and Arpad (near Aleppo) in the tenth and ninth centuries BCE. They promoted their local Aramaic dialect to a literary language for representational and probably also administrational purposes. This early Old Aramaic, which appears as rather uniform in western Syria (due to a common scribal culture and the increasing dominance of Aram–Damascus), is only attested in about a dozen monumental inscriptions from the ninth and eighth centuries BCE (Schwiderski 2004 contains basic editions for most Old and Imperial Aramaic texts and cross-references other major editions; only more recent editions of major texts will be explicitly mentioned in the following). Dialectal variation is more pronounced in additional inscriptions from the periphery of the Aramaic sphere: Tell Fekheriye near Ras al-Ayn in northern Syria, Zincirli in the Anti-Taurus mountains of southern Turkey, Tel Dan in northern Israel, and Deir Alla in the Jordan valley in northern Jordan. Except for the Tell Fekheriye inscription, which might attest to a distinct Old Aramaic dialect, the languages of the other texts were probably based on the western Syrian standard, with influences from local languages. Yet another inscription from far-off Bukan, in western Iran, testifies to the enormous prestige of this official language even in non-Aramaic speaking areas beyond the control of the kingdom of Aram-Damascus (Gzella 2015, 53–103).

When the Neo-Assyrian and then the Neo-Babylonian empires rose to power and dominated Syria–Palestine in the seventh and sixth centuries BCE, the Aramaean kingdoms lost their independence and were reduced to vassal states. This affected the status and use of their language as well, which was by then spoken not only in Syria but increasingly also in Mesopotamia. Like the early Old Aramaic of Aram–Damascus, the more variegated forms of late Old Aramaic continued to function as a supra-regional *koiné* (Gzella 2015, 104–156). Unlike the earlier idiom, however, late Old Aramaic was not used for representational purposes and royal inscriptions, since Akkadian functioned as "national" language of the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian empires. But Aramaic successively became more and more important in the administration, which was essentially bilingual Aramaic–Akkadian. Some two-hundred legal deeds and contracts on clay tablets as well as short Aramaic labels on cuneiform tablets from sites in Mesopotamia and Syria comprise the bulk of the Aramaic corpus from this period. Few similar texts on papyrus have been preserved by the sands of Egypt, as have half a dozen private letters from Hermopolis. In addition, the Assur–Ostracon and a letter sent from Ekron in Palestine to the Pharaoh in Egypt testify to the use of Aramaic in international diplomacy and politics; this is also the context for Hezekiah's request recorded in 2 Kings 18 to use Aramaic in his negotiations with the envoys of Sennacherib, king of Assyria. Besides its importance as an international language of administration and politics, Aramaic continued to fulfill a representational and cultural function in the Aramaean heartland of Syria, as evinced by two funerary inscriptions for local priests from Nerab in northern Syria. Supposedly, the Ahikar proverbs, the earliest known Aramaic literary text, also originated somewhere in Syria in the Neo-Assyrian period.

In 539 BCE, the Persian king Cyrus the Great took over the Neo-Babylonian Empire and incorporated it into the Achaemenid Empire, which would grow steadily, to stretch from Egypt to Afghanistan. Until Alexander the Great's victorious campaign of 331 BCE, the non-Semitic Achaemenid dynasty ruled the vast Aramaic-speaking territories from Syria–Palestine to Mesopotamia, and additional areas of the Middle East. The Achaemenids adopted the existing Neo-Babylonian administrative system, in which Aramaic was already prominent, and reformed and unified it under Darius I and Xerxes. In this new Achaemenid administration, a Babylonian Aramaic dialect came to function as a universal *koiné* for all official legal and administrative matters, in order to ease communication and bureaucratic procedures in a vast, multi-lingual empire. This so-called Imperial Aramaic or Official Aramaic was taught in scribal schools throughout the empire (often to non-Aramaic speaking scribes) and evinces only minor variations in the hundreds of texts that attest to it (Folmer 1995). This is especially surprising given the geographical spread of the evidence.

The bulk of the Imperial Aramaic texts stems from Egypt, most notably from the island of Elephantine in the south, where a colony of Jewish mercenaries had settled. It includes hundreds of lists, accounts, and other short administrative texts on ostraca (Lozachmeur 2006) and papyrus as well as longer legal deeds and contracts. Various letters contain the correspondence of local inhabitants and clerks with higher Achaemenid officials. A translation of the Elamite–Old Persian–Babylonian Bisotun inscription that promoted the Achaemenid royal ideology shows that, in the provinces, Aramaic was also employed for less mundane, political purposes. Two literary texts – the story of the wise Ahiqar (into which the earlier proverbs were interwoven) and the Bar Punesh fragments – proof

that Imperial Aramaic was not restricted to the administrative and political spheres, but also served as a vehicle to express cultural identity. This is also evident from the material from Palestine, which – until relatively recently – was restricted to the Aramaic literary texts from the biblical books of Ezra and Daniel. The Aramaic letters incorporated in Ezra in particular follow the scribal and linguistic conventions of Imperial Aramaic (irrespective of whether they constitute original political documents or literature) and can be compared to the material from Egypt, whereas the Aramaic sections in Daniel evince traces of a more advanced post-Achaemenid local Aramaic dialect. Additional epigraphic material has been published recently: a cache of 37 fragmentary legal deeds and documents from Samaria (Dušek 2007), ca. 2000 short, mainly administrative ostraca from Idumaea and southern Judah, some from the Hellenistic period (Porten and Yardeni 2014–2016; Yardeni 2016; Eshel, Kloner and Puech 2007), and fragments of some 350 dedicatory and votive inscriptions on stone from a Samaritan cultic structure on Mt. Gerizim (Magen, Misgav and Tsefania 2004).

The rest of Syria–Palestine yields almost no inscriptional evidence, but to the south, in North-Arabia, some thirty Aramaic funerary and dedicatory inscriptions and stelae were erected by locals of the oasis of Taima. In the northern provinces of Asia Minor, Aramaic was occasionally used for representational purposes as well. Stelae with (often fragmentary) Aramaic texts have been found, e.g. in Xanthos and Limyra in Lycia, Daskyleion in Phrygia, Gözne and Bahadırlı in Cilicia, and Sardis in Lydia. These were often erected by private individuals and belong at least partially in religious contexts, but additional small finds attest to the use of Aramaic in the administration as well. Until quite recently, there was no direct evidence for Aramaic in the eastern provinces of the Achaemenid Empire, although the so-called Aśoka inscriptions from Afghanistan and Pakistan from Hellenistic times made it likely that Aramaic was in use in the east as well. This is now proven by some thirty administrative documents on parchment and wood from late-Achaemenid Bactria (Naveh and Shaked 2012). These letters, lists, and legal texts evince the same language and style as the Achaemenid administrative material from Egypt and Palestine and testify to the uniformity of Imperial Aramaic.

Language Contact, Social Settings, and Language Use

Since Aramaic developed into the *lingua franca* of the vast Persian Empire, and was used in the entire Middle East, it was in contact with many languages from the area. Often this language contact can be associated with distinct social settings. Language contact and contact induced change are attested in Old Aramaic as well, but these were less prevalent.

Old Aramaic

Early Old Aramaic from the ninth and eighth centuries BCE is almost exclusively attested in the Aramaic heartland of Syria and was presumably written mainly, if not exclusively, by Aramaic–speakers (except for the later Bukan inscription, the linguistic environment of which remains elusive). Thus, the inscriptions from the core area between Damascus and Aleppo evince almost no palpable influence from foreign languages. However, this

is different in the epigraphic material from the periphery. In the south, the Aramaic territory bordered on Israel. In this area, spoken Aramaic and Hebrew would have formed a dialect continuum. The Aramaic of the Tel Dan stele has often been interpreted as reflecting contact induced areal features, though all examples are ambiguous (Gzella 2015, 79–87): Only this Old Aramaic text (and the Zakkur inscription) regularly employ the conjunction *w-* 'and' with imperfect forms for consecutive events in the past, a syntagma typical of Biblical Hebrew and Moabite prose. In addition, the direct object marker *ʾyt* and the verbal root √lḥm 'to fight, go to war' could represent Canaanite influence. The occasional Aramaism in Early Biblical Hebrew, especially in texts of northern provenance (e.g. the verbal root √mḥq 'to strike' in the Song of Deborah in Judges 5:2), shows that influence was reciprocal. It probably continued during the Late Old Aramaic period, though it is not traceable. Subsequently, the contact intensified and climaxed under Persian rule.

The Deir Alla inscription from Transjordan differs strikingly from other Old Aramaic texts in both language and genre. It comprises fragments of two distinct religious literary texts (a vision of the seer Balaam son of Beor, who is known from Numbers 22–24, and wisdom sayings) written in ink on a plastered wall. Its language shows strong Canaanite influence, mainly in the lexicon (e.g. the verbal roots √dbr 'to speak' and √rʾy "to see') and in syntax and literary style (*w-* 'and' with imperfect for the past tense, as in Tel Dan). Two seemingly morphological Canaanisms, a N-stem participle and the imperative *lkw* 'go!' are perhaps best accounted for as lexicalized. The peculiar mixture of Aramaic and Canaanite forms in the Deir Alla texts has given rise to different explanations: It could represent a natural local dialect, halfway between Aramaic and Hebrew on the dialectal map. Or the text might reflect an adaption to the new prestige language of Aram–Damascus (following its conquest of the area) of a Canaanite original. If so, the Aramaic of Deir Alla would be an artificial literary language (Gzella 2015, 87–91).

In the north-western periphery, in south-western Turkey and northern Syria, the linguistic situation was even more complex, if the epigraphic evidence from Zincirli, ancient Sam'al, is representative. In the ninth to seventh centuries BCE, at least four distinct languages were in use in this area. There is not much direct evidence for the Anatolian language Luwian in Zincirli, except for few very fragmentary Hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions. But Luwian personal names and more inscriptions from nearby sites, notably Karatepe, suggest that the language was used for representational purposes, and might also have been spoken, though influence on the Semitic idioms is not apparent. Until the middle of the ninth century, official inscriptions were written in Standard Phoenician. It functioned as a prestige language and was probably not spoken in the area. Subsequently, Sam'alian, a language with archaic features (e.g. vestiges of case endings in the plural) and some resemblance to Aramaic, though ultimately of disputed affiliation (Noorlander 2012), was used for royal inscriptions for a short period in the middle of the eighth century. Supposedly, this was a local dialect; it might also be responsible for the rare cases of Aramaic-like features in the earlier Phoenician inscriptions. Finally, in the second half of the eighth century, the kings of Sam'al adopted the Old Aramaic standard for their royal inscriptions, in all likelihood for reasons of prestige. In less official context, in a funerary inscription of a private individual (Pardee 2009), a mix of Sam'alian and Old Aramaic linguistic features is discernible. The influence of the local idiom on the newly adopted

koiné was possibly the result of imperfect learning (or, alternatively, Old Aramaic features were deliberately interwoven into a Sam'alian text in order to increase its prestige).

In Tell Fekheriye on the Habur river, the sole Old Aramaic bilingual inscription was found, with almost identical Aramaic and Akkadian versions (Gzella 2015, 63–67). In the middle of the ninth century BCE, this was Aramaic-speaking territory, but following the Assyrian conquest, Akkadian was introduced as an official language as well. The Aramaic that served as chancellery language for representational purposes was based on a local dialect and is clearly distinct from the Western Syrian standard, notably in orthography (*s* not *š* for /θ/; word-medial *matres lectionis*) and morphology (e.g. 3mp pronominal suffix *-m*, not *-hm*, fs demonstrative *z't*). Some of these distinctive features could be connected to later East Aramaic dialects. It is unlikely that there was substantial contact with spoken Akkadian in the area, but acquaintance with the conventions of written Akkadian might have caused a change away from verb–initial word order in the Aramaic. In addition, the language incorporated some cultic and administrative Akkadian terms as loan words, e.g., *mt* 'land', *gwgl* 'inspector of canals', and *'dqwr* 'cultic vessel'. The evidence from Tell Fekheriye foreshadows the intensifying Aramaic-Akkadian language contact in Mesopotamia in the following three centuries.

Generally, late Old Aramaic texts are short and formulaic and do not yield much material for linguistic analysis. Substantial traces of language contact and its effects are restricted to Mesopotamia, where most of the material was found, even though Aramaic must have been in contact with Canaanite languages, notably Hebrew, in Syria–Palestine and with dialects of Ancient Egyptian in Egypt. From the late eighth century BCE onward, Aramaic was established as a second administrative language in the Neo-Assyrian, and subsequently in the Neo-Babylonian Empire (Gzella 2015, 124–139). The Aramaic–Akkadian bilingualism of the administration is known from non-linguistic sources, such as the famous depictions of pairs of scribes for the two languages, but it also left clear traces in the epigraphic record. In general, while most administrative texts are in Akkadian, a sizable number of Aramaic tablets testify to the use of that language in the very same text types and with the same functions; one may assume that more Aramaic texts written on perishable materials (and not on clay tablets) were lost to the ravages of time. Akkadian and Aramaic texts were often part of the same archive, and some documents were even bilingual, with parallel Aramaic and Akkadian versions on the two sides of one tablet. More often, however, Akkadian tablets were tagged with Aramaic keywords, for easier reference. The latter practice, in particular, suggests that some clerks were literate in Aramaic, but not in Akkadian. The number of bilingual individuals is impossible to gauge (and it will have varied from place to place, and over time), but ultimately Aramaic became the predominantly spoken language, advancing also into the Assyrian heartland to the east, and subsequently into Babylonia. In the seventh and sixth centuries, a sizable proportion of the population in these areas shifted from speaking Akkadian to Aramaic, though Akkadian unequivocally maintained its status as prestige language and vehicle for cultural expression. The local idioms might shine through the surprising variation in the language of the Aramaic documents, which do not adhere to a universal standard. The language shift and the bilingualism in the administration affected both Akkadian (see chapter 8) and Aramaic (Kaufman 1974). Systemic influence is often difficult to pinpoint, but Akkadian is probably responsible for the increase in deviation from verb-initial word order and in the use

of the relative marker *zy*, patterned after Akkadian *ša*. In the lexicon, where Akkadian influence is most pronounced, different contact phenomena can be observed: Aramaic absorbed numerous loanwords, especially from the administrative sphere, e.g., *dnh* 'legal document' or *ʾgrt* 'letter'. Some rare instances seem to represent code-switching (which would imply bilingualism of sorts), e.g. *yrḥʾ smnh* 'the eighth month', with the Akkadian form of the numeral. Other Akkadian terms that designate *realia* from the semantic fields of agriculture and daily life (a possible example would be *rsh* 'choice fruits') are best interpreted as substrate words, fossils of the language shift; many of them surface only in later dialects, some survive even in modern Eastern Neo-Aramaic.

Imperial Aramaic

With the demise of the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian empires, the importance of Akkadian decreased significantly. No longer a spoken language, it ceased to exert direct influence on Aramaic. However, the Babylonian dialect of Aramaic that under Darius I became the official administrative language of the Persian Empire still preserved numerous Akkadian loan- and substrate words, which had entered the language in the preceding centuries (Muraoka and Porten 2003, 348–350). In the east, Akkadian retained some of its cultural prestige even in Aramaic contexts, as evinced by the Uruk incantation text from Hellenistic times, an Aramaic text written in cuneiform script (and important for its representation of the Aramaic vowels), and by the Aramaic translation of the Elamite-Old Persian-Babylonian multilingual from Bisotun, which seems closer to the Akkadian than to the non-Semitic versions.

Of the prestige languages of the Persian court, Elamite and Old Persian, only the latter left palpable traces in Imperial Aramaic. Since use and knowledge of the Persian language was not promoted in the provinces, it did not spread beyond its home base. Therefore, Imperial Aramaic was not significantly exposed to spoken Persian and, as a consequence, does not show much systemic influences from that language. The numerous Persian loanwords fulfilled functional needs and do not necessarily point to intensive language contact: Most designate administrative titles and positions or legal terms (e.g., *prtrk* 'governor' or *ʾdrnḡ* 'guarantor') and are clearly linked to the *realia* of the bureaucratic system in which Imperial Aramaic was used (Muraoka and Porten 2003, 351–352). In the documents from Bactria, where an East Iranian language was spoken, non-technical Persian loanwords are more common, including function words (Naveh and Shaked 2012, 54–57). The use of the passive participle together with the preposition *l-* to denote the agent is first attested in Imperial Aramaic. This peculiar syntagma, which expresses actions in the past, goes back to the equivalent Old Persian *manā krtam* construction and is one of the hallmarks of later Eastern Aramaic (Folmer 1995, 376–380). Indeed, while Old Persian influence on Aramaic is restricted to the Persian period, Iranian–Aramaic language contact has continued in Mesopotamia until today.

In the provinces, Imperial Aramaic was in contact with the indigenous languages. In the case of non-Semitic languages, the contact seems to have been concurrent with Persian rule and was not intense. The Aramaic epigraphic material from Anatolia is not numerous and decreases from Cilicia in the east to Lydia in the west, as one moves away from Aramaic-speaking territory. Inscriptions were often set up for private purposes by

individuals of higher standing rather than by officials. For these individuals, Aramaic served as a prestige language (and perhaps as a means to express loyalty to the empire), but a substantial number of bilingual inscriptions (unparalleled in other parts of the empire) also points to the importance of the local languages. Some lexical loans from Anatolian languages have been identified in this material, which contains additional obscure words and instances of ungrammatical Aramaic, such as the lack of gender concord (Folmer 1995, 742–744). These features are the result of imperfect learning by non-Aramaic speakers. The semi-official nature of the texts might also be responsible for slips in the Aramaic.

In Egypt, too, the other non-Semitic province from which linguistic material survives, direct evidence for Egyptian–Aramaic language contact consists mainly of loanwords. However, the contact situation was apparently more complex than in Anatolia. Egyptian–Aramaic language contact slightly predates the Persian Empire and it continued in reduced form into Hellenistic times. The numerous Egyptian loanwords in Imperial Aramaic typically designate *realia*, notably from the semantic field of boat-building, e.g. *pḫṭmwny* 'mooring pole' (though this might be accidental; see Muraoka and Porten 2003, 352–353), and they were employed in administrative texts that relate to the respective objects; Aramaic loanwords in Egyptian are few and far between (Stadel 2009, 156). There are no clear-cut cases of imperfect learning or Egyptian influence on Aramaic grammar, which might be due to the official nature of the Aramaic documents from Egypt. Indirect and very fragmentary evidence suggests that contact extended beyond the sphere of administration and *realia*: In the cases of Ahiqar, the Bar Punesh story, and the Sheikh Fadl inscription, borrowing of literary motifs or translation from one language into the other is very likely. In addition, Papyrus Amherst 63 from Hellenistic times contains various Aramaic texts in Hieratic script, and could (when edited and better understood) supply useful information on Aramaic vowels.

In the provinces of Syria–Palestine, spoken Aramaic successively replaced the local Semitic languages, a process that was only completed in the Hellenistic or Roman periods. This language shift naturally led to heavy Aramaic influence on the indigenous languages, notably Hebrew, Phoenician, and the Transjordanian languages. Hebrew–Aramaic contact is best attested, as it has left clear traces in Jewish religious literature from Second-Temple times. Already before the Persian period, spoken Hebrew and Aramaic had formed a dialect continuum in northern Palestine, that resulted in mutual influences between the languages. Over time, the speech area of Hebrew shrank, and Aramaic gradually became the majority language, even in Judea. This process was certainly accelerated by the influx of Aramaic-speaking returnees from the Babylonian exile, particularly under Nehemiah. In Persian period Palestine, Aramaic dialects were spoken by a majority of the population and Imperial Aramaic was the official administrative language, whereas Hebrew became a prestige language for culture and religion, spoken only by few. The change in the status of Hebrew and Aramaic in Palestine is reflected in the effects of language contact: Unlike in earlier periods, influence became almost unidirectional. Starting in the Persian period, hundreds of Aramaic loanwords and loan translations entered Hebrew (including many Akkadian and Persian terms that had previously been loaned into Aramaic), e.g., *qərâb* 'battle', *ʾillū* 'if'. These come from various semantic fields (though administrative and political terms are common) and even include function words. This contrasts with very few Hebrew loanwords in Imperial Aramaic, which are restricted to the cultic sphere,

e.g., *psḥ* 'Passover'. In addition, Aramaic also exerted systemic influence on the Late Biblical Hebrew of the Persian period, e.g., in the verbal system and in the marking of direct objects with the preposition *l-* (Stadel 2013). Biblical texts from the Persian period exhibit an Aramaic gloss (Genesis 31:48) as well as instances of code-switching in the books of Daniel and Ezra, which are written partly in Aramaic. The adoption of the Imperial Aramaic script for writing Hebrew texts is another, non-linguistic, sign of the prominence of Aramaic during the Persian period. Due to their prominent status as Jewish cultural languages, Hebrew and Aramaic formed a symbiosis and continued to influence each other until they ceased to be spoken in Palestine, in the second and tenth centuries CE, respectively.

Grammatical Sketch

While the Old to Imperial Aramaic dialects are relatively uniform in comparison to Late and Neo-Aramaic, they exhibit some differences in phonology, morphology, and spelling practices. In this sketch, we shall differentiate Old Aramaic (OA) from Imperial Aramaic (IA), where applicable. More comprehensive treatments can be found in the reference grammars by Degen (1969) for early Old Aramaic, Hug (1993) for late Old Aramaic, Muraoka and Porten (2003) for Imperial Aramaic, and Bauer and Leander (1927) for the biblical texts. The standard dictionary is Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1995, and Schwiderski 2008 serves as concordance (with basic glosses). Beyer (1984–2004) provides a chronology of sound changes and offers reconstructions for the pronunciation of many lexical items. His proposals have informed the reconstructions offered in this sketch.

Phonology and Orthography

The reconstruction of Aramaic phonology is complicated by the nature of the Aramaic alphabet, and by ambivalent scribal practices: The alphabet consists of 22 letters that represent consonants only. In OA, and to a lesser extent in IA, five letters serve double (or triple) duty and represent more than one consonantal phoneme. Vowels are not systematically indicated by the script, but over time {y} and {w} were increasingly employed to indicate long *i-* and *u*-vowels, respectively. {ʾ} and {h} were often used to indicate long final *a* or *e*. Vowels in particular, but also the value of certain consonants, can only be reconstructed from transcriptions of Aramaic into other writing systems, and from later traditions.

Consonants

OA had 29 consonants. Those marked (OA) in Table 17.1 had merged with others by the end of the IA period, resulting in an inventory of 23 (or 25) consonantal phonemes in IA.

In OA and IA, the emphatic consonants were pharyngealized, i.e. coarticulated with /ˤ/: *ṣ* /sˤ/, *ṭ* /tˤ/, *ṯ* /θˤ/. The rhotic *r* might have been realized as an alveolar trill or uvular fricative. The interdentals gradually merged with the corresponding dentals, perhaps starting in late OA: *ṯ* /θ/ (OA {š}), *t* /t/ > /t/ {t}; *ḏ* /ð/ (OA {z}), *d* /d/ > /d/ {d}; *ṯ* /θˤ/ (OA {ṣ}), *ṭ* /tˤ/ > /tˤ/ {ṭ}. These mergers are also reflected in the differing IA orthography.

Table 17.1 Old Aramaic consonantal inventory.

	Bilabial	*Inter-dental*	*Alveolar/ Dental*	*Alveolar-lateral*	*Palatal*	*Velar*	*Pharyn-geal*	*Glottal*
Stop								
Voiceless	*p*	*t̲* (OA)	*t*			*k*		*ʾ*
Voiced	*b*	*d̲* (OA)	*d*			*g*		
Emphatic		*ṯ* (OA)	*ṭ*			*q*		
Fricative								
Voiceless			*s*	*ś*	*š*	*ḫ* (OA)	*ḥ*	*h*
Voiced			*z*			*ġ* (OA)	*ʿ*	
Emphatic			*ṣ*					
Affricate								
Voiced						*ḡ* (OA)		
Approximant	*w*		*r*	*l*	*y*			
Nasal	*m*		*n*					

Toward the end of the IA period, the affricate voiced velar (or uvular) *ḡ* (OA {q}) merged with *ġ* /ɣ/ {ʿ}, though the old orthography is still preserved in biblical Aramaic in Jeremiah 10:11. Either in IA or shortly thereafter, the velar fricatives *ḫ* /x/ and *ġ* /ɣ/ merged with their pharyngeal counterparts *ḥ* /ħ/ and *ʿ* /ʕ/, respectively. This merger is difficult to date precisely since it did not affect the spelling. The lateral *ś* /ɬ/, spelled {š}, was still distinct in IA and would only later merge with /s/. The spirantization of the non-emphatic stops in post-vocal position, so characteristic of later Aramaic dialects, probably postdates IA (it is marked in the vocalization of biblical Aramaic), though the dating of this phenomenon is contested (Beyer 1984, 126–128; Muraoka and Porten 2003, 5).

In IA, /ʾ/ was lost in coda, which resulted in the lengthening of the preceding vowel (in the case of /aʾ/ to /ɛ̄/). /n/ regularly assimilates to the following consonant and causes gemination. In IA, geminated consonants may be represented by {nC} in writing, even where /n/ is not etymological, e.g. *mnd*ʿ /maddaʿ/ 'knowledge' (IA). This is variously interpreted as an orthographic convention signifying gemination, or as an indication of nasalization of geminates.

Vowels, Diphthongs, and Stress

In OA and IA, vowel length was phonemic. Four qualities are usually reconstructed for OA, and an additional one, marked (IA) in Table 17.2, emerged later from monophthongization.

The six OA phonemes /a/, /ā/, /i/, /ī/, /u/, /ū/ were inherited from Proto-Semitic, /ɛ̄/ is the result of monophthongization of **ay* in certain environments. /aw/ was retained in OA, but was contracted to /ō/ in IA. The OA short vowels /i/ and /u/ were lowered to /e/ and /o/ in IA, respectively.

Stress is difficult to reconstruct for OA and IA and will not be indicated in reconstructed forms. Based on the pattern of vowel loss in later dialects, one may assume that it rested

Table 17.2 Old and Imperial Aramaic vowels.

	Front	*Central*	*Back*
High	*i ī*		*u ū*
Mid	*ē*		*ō* (IA)
Low		*a ā*	

for the most part on the last syllable, though some exceptional forms (mainly pronouns and forms with suffixes) had penultimate stress.

Nominal Morphology and Morphosyntax

Nouns

Nouns are declined for gender, number, and states (remnants of the case system survive in Sam'alian, not included in this sketch). The respective endings are predictable only for adjectives (including participles) and are represented in Table 17.3.

The two genders, masculine and feminine, are lexical and cannot be inferred with certainty from the morphology. While masculine nouns are almost always unmarked, and most feminine nouns are marked by the ending *-h* /-ā/, there are exceptions such as the feminine nouns *ʾm* /ʾemm/ 'mother' (IA) or *mln* /millīn/ 'words' (OA). Of the three numbers, singular, plural, and dual, the latter is not fully productive and restricted to body parts, e.g. *ʾdnyn* /ʾednayn/ 'two ears' (IA). It differs from the plural in the masc. abs. *-yn* /-ayn/, the fem. abs. *-tyn* /-tayn/, and the fem. cst. *-ty* /-tay/. The plural is always indicated by endings, but monosyllabic nouns of the *qatl / *qitl / *qutl noun patterns also show internal modification by the addition of the vowel /a/ after the second radical, e.g. *mlkn* /malakīn/ 'kings'. The absolute state serves as default state and is used, e.g. to signify indefinite referents. It contrasts with the determinate state, which marks definiteness, identifiability in context. The construct state marks a bound form that expresses a genitive relationship with the following noun, e.g. *mlkyʾrpd* /malkay ʾarpad/ 'the kings of Arpad'.

Table 17.3 Old and Imperial Aramaic nominal declension.

	Singular	*Plural*
Masc. abs.	Ø	*-n* (IA also *-yn*) /-īn/
Masc. cst.	Ø	*-y* /-ay/
Masc. det.	*-ʾ* /-ā/	*-yʾ* /-ayyā/
Fem. abs.	*-h* /-ā/	*-n* /-ān/
Fem. cst.	*-t* /-at/	*-t* /-āt/
Fem. det.	*-tʾ* /-tā/	*-tʾ* /-ātā/

Pronouns

Aramaic has independent pronouns and pronominal suffixes. The pronouns are mainly used to indicate the subject in nominal clauses (or stress it when added to finite verbal forms). Third person pronouns also serve as copula in nominal sentences. See Table 17.4.

In Biblical Aramaic, as in all later Jewish Aramaic texts, the third person singular forms are spelled *hwʾ* and *hyʾ*, as in Hebrew. The 3ms pronoun *hmw* also designates direct objects.

Pronominal suffixes double as object suffixes on verbal forms and possessive suffixes on nouns. The forms in Table 17.5 are those found on singular nouns.

Possessive suffixes are attached to nouns in the construct state. Hence, when attached to masculine plural nouns, the suffixes are precedes by the construct plural ending *-y* /-ay/, e.g. *ywmyhm* /yawmayhūm/ 'their days' (OA). This rule does not hold for the 1cs and 3ms suffixes, which, on masculine plural nouns, appear as *-y* /-ayy/ and *-wh* (IA *-why*) /-awhī/, respectively. The suffixes in Table 17.5 (except for the third person plural forms) are also attached to verbal forms to indicate a pronominalized object, though in this case the 1cs suffix is always *-ny* /-nī/. Imperfect forms with object suffixes sometimes evince an *n* before the suffix.

Proximal and distal demonstratives can be used pronominally or adnominally. In the latter case, the demonstrative follows the noun (in the determined state) to which it refers. The main forms are given in Table 17.6.

Table 17.4 Old and Imperial Aramaic independent pronouns.

	Singular		*Plural*	
1c	*ʾnh*	/ʾanā/	IA *ʾnḥn(h)*	/ʾanaḥnā/
2m	*ʾt*, IA *ʾnt*	/ʾattā/	IA *ʾntm*	/ʾattūm/
2f	IA *ʾnt(y)*	/ʾattī/	-	-
3m	*hʾ*, IA *hw*	/hū/ (IA)	*hmw*, *hm*	/humū/
3f	*hʾ*, IA *hy*	/hī/ (IA)	-	-

Table 17.5 Old and Imperial Aramaic pronominal suffixes.

	Singular		*Plural*	
1c	*-y*	/-ī/	*-n*	/-anā/
2m	*-k*	/-akā/	*-km*	/-okūm/ (IA)
2f	IA *-ky*	/-ekī/	IA *-kn*	/-ekenn/
3m	*-h*	/-eh/	*-hm*	/-ohūm/ (IA)
3f	*-h*	/-ah/	*-hn*	/-ehenn/ (IA)

Table 17.6 Old and Imperial Aramaic demonstrative pronouns.

	Proximal		*Distal*	
Masc. sg.	*znh*	/ðinā/	IA *zk*	/dek/
Fem. sg.	*zʾ*	/ðā/	IA *zk*	/dāk/
Plural	*ʾl*, IA *ʾlh*	/ʾillē/	IA *ʾlk*	/ʾellēk/

Table 17.7 Numbers 1-10 in Old and Imperial Aramaic.

	Unmarked	*Marked*
1	*ḥd* /ḥad/	*ḥdh* /ḥadā/
2	IA *tryn* /terayn/	IA *trtyn* /tertayn/
3	IA *tlt* /talāt/	IA *tlth* /talātā/
4	IA *ʾrbʿ* /ʾarbaʿ/	IA *ʾrbʿh* /ʾarbaʿā/
5		IA *ḥmšh* /ḥamešā/
6		IA *šth* /šettā/
7	*šbʿ* /šabaʿ/	IA *šbʿh* /šabʿā/
8		IA *tmnyh* /tamāniyā/
9		
10		IA *ʿšrh* /ʿaśarā/

The distal demonstratives are unattested in OA, but third person independent pronouns (*hʾ*) occasionally denote distal deixis, as they do in IA and later dialects. In IA, the interdental /ð/ of the proximal forms shifted to /d/ (as in the distal forms), yielding /denā/ and /dā/, but the conservative orthography with {z} was usually retained. The relative complementizer *zy* /ðī/ (IA also *dy*) 'who, which' is probably cognate with the deictic element in the demonstratives.

The interrogative pronouns *mh* /mā/ 'what' and *mn* /man/ 'who' are common in OA and IA; other interrogatives are attested in the latter only, e.g. *lmh* /lamā/ 'why', *ʾyk* /ʾaykā/ 'how', and *ʾmt* /ʾemmatī/ 'when'. In IA, there is a special indefinite pronoun for inanimate objects: *mndʿm* /maddaʿm/ 'anything'. The nouns *gbr* /gabr/ and *ʾyš* /ʾīš/ are sometimes used as indefinite pronouns 'anyone'.

Numbers and Quantifiers

Numbers are rare in the OA royal inscriptions and are often expressed by ciphers in the IA administrative texts. Table 17.7 lists the attested cardinal numbers from 1 to 10.

Numbers 'one' and 'two' are adjectives and follow the counted noun, the others are substantives and precede it. Numbers 'three' to 'ten' show "reverse" gender agreement, with the unmarked forms modifying feminine, and the marked forms masculine nouns. Decades are formed by adding the masculine plural ending to the unmarked form (but 'twenty' is the plural of 'ten', *ʿšrn*), e.g. *šlšn* /ṯalāṯīn/ 'thirty' (OA). Cardinal numbers as well as the quantifier *kl* /kull/ 'each, every' (OA) are normally construed with nouns in the absolute state.

Verbal Morphology and Morphosyntax

Verbal forms consist of the lexical root (a combination of three consonants, radicals, that signifies a basic meaning), the vowel pattern of the verbal stems, which are associated with nuances of lexical aspect and voice, and the prefixes and affixes of the verbal conjugations,

which indicate person, gender, and number. OA and IA attest to three conjugations, the perfect and the imperfect and short imperfect, as well as the imperative, the infinitive, and the participle. These express tense, aspect, and modality.

Perfect

The perfect (or suffix conjugation) is mainly employed to express a past event or perfective aspect, notably in performative utterances. Table 17.8 exemplifies the conjugational suffixes, which are here separated by a hyphen from the root √ktb 'to write' in the unmarked, basic G-stem.

In IA, the 2mp ending gradually changed to *-t(w)n* /-tūn/. In OA and IA, there is no gender distinction in the third person plural, but biblical Aramaic preserves a 3fp ending /-ā/ in the reading tradition, although the respective forms are spelled *ktbw* in the consonantal text.

Imperfects and Imperative

The two imperfect conjugations mark person, gender, and number by a combination of prefixes and suffixes. Table 17.9 gives the OA forms of the regular imperfect; unattested forms are supplied from IA. The regular imperfect mainly expresses nuances of present and future tense, whereas the short imperfect, or jussive, is reserved for deontic modality.

The prefixes are the same in both conjugations, but the short imperfect differs from the regular one in that the 2fs, 2mp, and 3mp suffixes lack the final /n/. The vocalic suffixes of the jussive are always represented in writing, e.g. *y-hpk-w* /ya-hpuk-ū/ 'they shall overthrow' (OA). In IA, the vowels of the 2fs, 2mp, and 3mp suffixes of the regular

Table 17.8 Conjugation of the perfect in Old and Imperial Aramaic.

	Singular		*Plural*	
1c	*ktb-t*	/katab-t/	*ktb-n*	/katab-nā/
2m	*ktb-t*	/katab-tā/	*ktb-tm*	/katab-tūm/
2f	IA *ktb-ty*	/katab-tī/	IA *ktb-tn*	/katab-tenn/
3m	*ktb-Ø*	/katab-Ø/	*ktb-w*	/katab-ū/
3f	*ktb-t*	/katab-at/		

Table 17.9 Conjugation of the imperfect in Old and Imperial Aramaic.

	Singular		*Plural*	
1c	*ʾ-ktb-Ø*	/ʾa-ktub-Ø/	IA *n-ktb-Ø*	/na-ktob-Ø/
2m	*t-ktb-Ø*	/ta-ktub-Ø/	*t-ktb-n*	/ta-ktub-ūn/
2f	IA *t-ktb-n*	/ta-ktob-īn/	IA *t-ktb-n*	/ta-ktob-ān/
3m	*y-ktb-Ø*	/ya-ktub-Ø/	*y-ktb-n*	/ya-ktub-ūn/
3f	*t-ktb-Ø*	/ta-ktub-Ø/	*y-ktb-n*	/ya-ktub-ān/

imperfect are also occasionally spelled out: *-yn* /īn/ and *-wn* /-ūn/, respectively. The feminine plural suffix can be reconstructed as /-ān/, based on evidence from later dialects. This secondary form is patterned after the masculine suffix /-ūn/, but it is impossible to date with precision the analogical change of this suffix from earlier /-n/ (< */-na/); it might postdate OA and even IA.

The morphology of the imperative is clearly connected to the second person forms of the modal short imperfect (without prefixes): ms *ktb-Ø* /ktub/, fs *ktb-y* /ktob-ī/ (IA), and mp *ktb-w* /ktub-ū/ (the feminine plural is unattested). The initial consonantal cluster could have been broken up by anaptyxis, yielding, e.g. /kətub/.

Participles and Infinitive

The active participle is a nominal form. However, its absolute state was gradually integrated into the verbal system of IA and later dialects and can take over verbal functions, mainly indicating present tense. In addition, it forms a periphrastic construction with the perfect or imperfect of the G-stem verb √hwy 'to be' to designate durative or iterative nuances in the past or future tense, respectively. The form of the participle differs in the different stems: the G-stem form is /kātib/ (OA), while participles of the derived stems all start with a prefixed /m-/ and follow the internal vowel patterns and consonantal morphemes of their respective stem. As a nominal form, the participle does not govern direct objects (and is never combined with object suffixes), even when functioning as a verb. Rather, objects of participial forms are introduced by the preposition *l-* /la-/ 'to, for', e.g. *šbq ʾnh lh* /šābeq ʾanā leh/ 'I leave him' (IA). The passive participle (/katīb/ in the G-stem) is still exclusively nominal in OA and IA, but it will become an integral part of the verbal system of later eastern Aramaic.

Like the participle, the prefixes and suffixes of the infinitive differ in the different stems. Additionally, there are differences between OA dialects, and between OA and IA. Early OA has G-stem infinitives without prefix in the west, e.g. *ʾgr* /ʾagar/ 'to reward' in Sam'al, and with prefixed *m-* in Tell Fekheriye, e.g. *l-mlqḥ* /la-malqaḥ/ 'to take' (with the preposition *l-*). The forms of the derived stems have a feminine ending (*-h* or *-t*) in the west, e.g. *l-ʾbdt* /la-ʾabbadat/ 'to destroy' (D-stem), but no ending in the east, e.g. *l-kbr* /la-kabbar/ 'to increase' (D-stem?). In late OA, the *m-* prefix may be found on infinitives of the G-stem and of derived stems, but only the latter show the feminine ending. In IA, the G-stem infinitive has the *m-* prefix (/la-maktab/) and the forms of the derived stems have the feminine ending *-h*, e.g. *l-zbnh* /la-zabbānā/ 'to sell' (D-stem). In contradistinction to OA, the IA infinitives are always combined with the preposition *l-* /la-/.

Stem System

Aramaic has six stems, derivational categories of the verb which express nuances of lexical aspect and voice. Each one is characterized by a distinct vowel pattern for the various verbal forms, and prefixes. Not all stems are attested (or available) for every verbal root. The G-stem (from German *Grundstamm*) is the basic stem and its morphology has been demonstrated above. The D-stem, which exhibits doubling or gemination of the second root consonant in all forms, is generally associated with plurality or factitivity. The C-stem

Table 17.10 Imperial Aramaic verbal stems.

	Perfect	*Imperfect*	*Imperative*	*Participle*	*Infinitive*
G	/katab/	/yaktob/	/ktob/	/kātib/	/maktab/
Gt	/ʾetkateb/	/yetkateb/	/ʾetkateb/	/metkateb/	/ʾetkatābā/
D	/katteb/	/yakatteb/	/katteb/	/makatteb/	/kattābā/
Dt	/ʾetkattab/	/yetkattab/	/ʾetkattab/	/metkattab/	/ʾetkattābā/
C	/ʾakteb/	/yakteb/	/ʾakteb/	/makteb/	/ʾaktābā/
Ct	/ʾettakateb/				

expresses causativity and is marked by the prefix /ʾa-/ (< OA /ha-/). There exist medio-passive variants with the prefix /t-/ for all three stems (Gt, Dt, Ct). Table 17.10 provides the reconstructed IA pronunciation (tentative for the Gt, and Dt stems; in OA, many forms are unattested) of the attested 3ms forms and ms imperatives and participles.

In the C-stem, the prefix of the stem is sometimes still written with {h} (even in word-internal position in the imperfect and infinitive; similarly in the Ct-stem: *ʾthktb*), as in OA, but this is probably a historical orthography, e.g. *yhškḥ* /yaškaḥ/ (< /yahaškaḥ/) 'he will find'. In the G-stem, the thematic vowel of the second syllable was mostly /a/ in the perfect and /o/ in the imperfect, but the vowel patterns /e/ – /o/ and /e/ – /a/ can probably also be reconstructed for IA (Bauer and Leander 1927, 103). The different thematic vowels were originally associated with lexical aspect (state vs. event), but over time this semantic distinction was lost, and the /a/ – /o/ pattern came to dominate.

Apart from the medio-passive stems Gt, Dt, and Ct, there existed passive variants of all three basic stems (Gp, Dp, Cp), which were differentiated from the active forms by *Ablaut*, i.e. variation in the vowel pattern. Forms other than passive participles are relatively rare and gradually fell out of use in IA, but perfects are still attested for the G- and C-stems, e.g. *šʾylt* /šaʾīlat/ 'she was interrogated' and *ʾškḥ ʾš* /ʾoškaḥ ʾīš/ 'a man was found'.

In the Gt- and Dt-stems, the /t/ of the stem regularly underwent metathesis with a following, root-initial sibilant, e.g. *ʾštbq* /ʾeštabeq/ 'he was abandoned' (root √šbq, IA). In addition, the /t/ partially assimilates to voiced /z/ and pharyngealized /ṣ/, yielding /d/ and /ṭ/, respectively.

Other root consonants, notably, /ʾ/, /w/, /y/, and /n/, also cause deviations from the regular verbal forms of sound roots presented above, but these changes are often predictable, e.g. elision of /ʾ/ in coda, contraction of diphthongs, and assimilation of /n/ to the following consonant. Unpredictable deviations peculiar to certain weak roots include, for example, the presence of long vowels in lieu of the second radicals /w/ and /y/ in G- and C-stem forms, e.g. *yšmw* /yaśīmū/ 'they shall put' (root √śym, G-stem, OA), the preservation of original /w/ in the C-stem of first radical /y/ roots, e.g. *hwšbny* /hawšabnī/ 'he made me sit down' (root √yšb < *√wšb, C-stem, OA), the gemination of the first radical (and degemination of the following one) in G-stem imperfect forms of roots with an identical second and third radical, e.g. *ysb* /yassub/ 'he surrounds' (root √sbb, OA), and loss of the initial /y/ in G-stem imperatives of first radical /y/ roots, e.g. *šbw* /*šabū*/ 'sit down!' (OA).

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CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Ancient South Arabian

Peter Stein

Introduction

Ancient South Arabian (ASA) is a conventional term to designate the languages which were spoken and written in South Arabia, the territory of present-day Yemen, between the early first millennium BCE and the late sixth century CE. Alternative designations for the same language group are "Old South Arabian" (OSA) and "Epigraphic South Arabian" (ESA), since transmission of these languages is mainly based on inscriptions, and finally the merely topographical "Ṣayhadic", relating to the name of the desert at the fringes of which the South Arabian civilisation emerged. Nevertheless, the most appropriate term is Ancient South Arabian, contrasting with "Modern South Arabian" (MSA) which designates the languages still spoken in the bordering area between Yemen and Oman, and at Socotra.

Four languages are commonly subsumed under ASA: Sabaic, Minaic (also: Madhābic, after the Wadi Madhāb), Qatabanic and Ḥaḍramitic. These are named by modern scholarship after the political entities that are behind them (namely the tribal confederations of Sabaʾ, Maʿīn, Qatabān and Ḥaḍramawt). We do not know how these languages had been called by their speakers themselves. The four languages are quite different from a linguistic point of view (see below). Designating them merely as "dialects" of one common ASA language, as had been done in the past, does in fact not meet the point and should be avoided not least because we face the existence of further dialects beyond the level of those four idioms. The existence of a separate language supposed to have been only spoken but hardly ever written among the tribal confederation of Ḥimyar in the south of Yemen ("Ḥimyaritic", Robin 2007), can certainly be denied. The alleged features of this idiom, which are documented in a handful of inscriptions from the south, but also from Mārib, can be explained by the poetic character of the particular texts, which are indeed written

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in Sabaic (Stein 2008). The "Ḥimyaritic" language referred to by medieval Arab authors is thus certainly an offshoot of Sabaic (cf. below).

The four languages are unevenly distributed within the chronological framework of South Arabian history. First attestations of ASA textual evidence, written in Sabaic and Minaic and commonly dated to the ninth century BCE, occur in the Wadi al-Jawf in the north of Yemen. Radiocarbon dates of wooden manuscripts, however, indicate that writing in South Arabia probably started in that very region as early as in the eleventh to tenth centuries BCE (Drewes et al. 2013). Documentation in Qatabanic and Ḥaḍramitic certainly followed soon after, though material evidence is comparatively scarce. While Sabaic was used as a written language up to the end of the South Arabian civilisation in the late sixth century CE, Minaic ceased to exist in the late first millennium BCE, and Qatabanic disappeared in the late second century CE in the course of the political decline of the Qatabanian kingdom. Only Ḥaḍramitic seems to have continued alongside Sabaic even until after the fall of the kingdom of Ḥaḍramawt around 300 CE, though epigraphic documentation is rather meagre. The Sabaic language which had been established in the central and northern parts of Yemen from the beginning ("Central Sabaic") was to be replaced as written standard by a southern dialect in the course of political domination by the Ḥimyar, a tribal confederation from the southern highlands, from the early fourth century CE onwards. It is probably this dialect of Ḥimyar or "South Sabaic" which remained in use even beyond the downfall of the South Arabian civilisation in the late sixth century CE and can thus be connected with the "Ḥimyaritic" language in medieval Yemen referred to by Arab authors.

Periodization of the ASA languages and script follows a scheme that is based on historical and linguistic aspects in the development of the Sabaic language, which is by far the best documented among the four languages (see Table 18.1):

Table 18.1 Periodization of Sabaic.

Early Sabaic	Tenth to fourth centuries BCE
Middle Sabaic	Third century BCE to third century CE
Late Sabaic	Fourth to sixth centuries CE

In each of these periods, the Sabaic language exhibits particular linguistic features. The features of Late Sabaic are identical with those of the dialect of Ḥimyar, which nevertheless occur already earlier in inscriptions from the southern Yemeni highlands (South Sabaic). The Late Sabaic period is also characterized by predominance of a monotheist faith, based first on Jewish, later, in the sixth century, on Christian influence. This is reflected, of course, in the written documentation.

Linguistic Differentiation and Affiliation

Linguistic affiliation of ASA has long been under dispute, oscillating between a classification as South Semitic (together with Ethiopic and Modern South Arabian) and as Central Semitic (with Canaanite, Aramaic and Arabic). The main problem is that the four idioms

have always been treated together as one linguistic group, in spite of severe differences between them. To give but two examples: While personal pronouns and the verbal causative stem are formed of a basis *h* in Sabaic (thus *hmw*, *-h*, *hfᶜl*, as in Northwest Semitic), they are with a sibilant in the three other (thus *sm*, *-s*, *sfᶜl*, as in Akkadian). Moreover, there is a close relationship between the systems of verbal stem formation in Minaic and Ethio–Semitic, in contrast to that in Sabaic, which is practically identical with Aramaic. Further differences between Sabaic and the other idioms concern verbal morphology (Stein 2012b). On the other hand, isoglosses which apparently support a common sub-grouping of all ASA languages, such as the formation of 1st and 2nd person perfect verbal forms with *-k* (thus *fᶜlk*) and the extensive use of so-called broken or internal plurals of the noun, are less specific and could be interpreted as areal or contact features (Huehnergard and Rubin 2011, 271–274). The linguistic difference between Sabaic and the other languages is perhaps also corroborated by lexical evidence (Kogan 2015, 601).

Against this background, any treatment of ASA as a consistent unit will fail. Instead of a common linguistic affiliation of all four languages, we have to look for models which will do justice to all mentioned aspects. This can be done by assuming a different genetic origin for Sabaic on the one hand and the three other languages on the other. From a linguistic point of view, the closest relative to Sabaic appears to be Aramaic, a Northwest Semitic language of the Central Semitic branch, while Minaic and probably Ḥaḍramitic are much closer to Ethio-Semitic and Modern South Arabian, which are traditionally labelled under South Semitic (Stein 2012b). Bearing in mind that also the ASA script has its origin in the Levant in the late second millennium BCE (Hayajneh and Tropper 1997), a possible scenario can be seen in an input from outside, namely, from the north–west of the Arabian Peninsula (Nebes 2001; Kottsieper and Stein 2014).

Though the idea of migration of a small group of proto-Sabaeans from north to south has been contested (Avanzini 2015), it is not easily disproven. The main arguments put forward against an exogenous origin of Sabaic may be assessed as follows:

1. The common formation of 1st and 2nd person perfect verbal forms in *-k* is paralleled by the same feature in parts of the Arabic dialect in Yemen, where it is doubtlessly explained as ASA substrate influence. In both cases, members of the newcomers borrowed the morphological feature from the substrate.
2. The existence of an imperfect pattern **yaqattal*, as characteristic for Ethiopic, can certainly be denied to have existed in Sabaic, as has convincingly been demonstrated by Nebes (1994); Sabaic must thus have had a form **yaqtulu*, which is commonly thought to be a shared innovation of Central Semitic (the respective evidence for the three other languages is still not significant enough to give a decisive answer).
3. The supposed improbability of migrations of larger population groups from a historical point of view gets irrelevant if we proceed from a movement of but small elites, a scenario which has also been proposed to explain the quick spread of the Aramaic language and script over the Fertile Crescent in the early first millennium BCE (Kottsieper and Stein 2014, 82–83). A reason for these movements could be seen in the collapse of the Levantine political system around 1200 BCE.

4. Archaeological evidence testifies for a continuity of settlement in South Arabia between the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age. Nevertheless, this says nothing about the ethnic identity of the inhabitants, and the language they spoke. It is beyond doubt that there was an established population of probably proto-Minaeans and proto-Ḥaḍramites who were confronted with the arriving groups of proto-Sabaeans at the end of the second millennium. In contrast to this, Qatabanic, which is in fact much closer to Sabaic than the two other, could be considered some hybrid language in between.
5. The time-span between the supposed arrival of the endogenous groups and the emergence of the first documents in Sabaic is probably only a few generations, perhaps 150 years or less. A comparatively short time span was, however, sufficient to allow the Aramaean elites in Syria and Mesopotamia to integrate and to establish their language and writing system.

In short, there is more evidence speaking in favour of a genetic differentiation of the ASA languages and, consequently, an exogenous origin of Sabaic, than against. In the classification of the Semitic languages, ASA should thus no longer be treated as a unit, but rather split up in at least two different parts: Sabaic and non-Sabaic – affiliating the first with traditional Central Semitic, and the last with the languages of the South (Ethio-Semitic and Modern South Arabian).

Textual Evidence and Writing System

The ASA languages are renowned for their epigraphic character. For a long time, only inscriptions were known, chiselled in rock surfaces and stone blocks, cast in bronze tablets, or (rarely) carved in precious votive objects. Indeed, the script these texts are worked in fits this purpose perfectly: The 29 letters of the ASA alphabet, as far as applied in inscriptions (cf. below), are fairly geometrical in shape, allowing an easy realisation by the stonemason as well as an aesthetically impressive appearance. In spite of some minor regional peculiarities in style, the principal layout, and palaeographical characteristics, of the script are practically identical in all four languages.

The main text genres which have come down to us are – apart from countless graffiti bearing simply names – votive and building inscriptions, official decrees and other legal documents, and some inscriptions commemorating political, military, and religious activities. The representative character of these inscriptions is accompanied by a stereotype shape of their formulae:

Votive inscriptions (about 2500 published texts, half of them in Sabaic) are modelled on the scheme *PN hqny GN X* "PN has dedicated to (the deity) GN (the object) X" (thus Sabaic, the other languages use the form *sqny* or the verb *śl*ʾ instead). This introductory clause is followed by circumstantial expressions describing the reason for the dedication, which may comprise lengthy historic accounts. These narratives are in fact the main source for reconstructing the political history of South Arabia in the first four centuries CE.

Building inscriptions (about 1000 texts and fragments, three-fourths of them in Sabaic) equally follow standardized formulae, employing the verbs *bny* or *br*ʾ "(NN) has built". Generally shorter than the votive inscriptions, they exhibit a broad lexical variety in terms of the particular structures which have been erected.

Lexically difficult are also some of the almost 400 (70% Sabaic) *public announcements of decrees and legal affairs*. Since these texts concern different aspects of social and religious life, however, they are essential for understanding the social history of Ancient South Arabia. Finally, among the numerically even smaller group of so-called *commemorative inscriptions*, we find some of the longest "Res gestae" of South Arabian rulers, which are of greatest importance particularly for the earliest (eighth to seventh century BCE) and the latest (sixth century CE) periods of Ancient South Arabian history when political influence of South Arabia exceeded the limits of the country by far (on the first period, see Nebes 2016). All in all, the number of published inscriptions in the four ASA languages, including the numerous graffiti bearing only names, adds up to more than 12 000 texts and fragments.

Everyday records, notes from daily life such as business accounts, contracts, and correspondence, had been unknown to modern scholarship for a long time. After principal decipherment of the first documents in the 1980s, this important aspect of ASA writing has been analysed and published in significant numbers only in the past twenty years (Ryckmans et al. 1994, Stein 2010, Maraqten 2014). One major problem of that material is its particular script, which differs considerably from the geometrical script of the contemporary inscriptions, as mentioned above, due to the specific writing process and material used. These everyday documents were scratched in wood – small pieces from palm-leaf stalks and branches of other sorts of wood – with a pointed stylus. Though initially identical with the letter forms of the inscriptions, the script of these documents consequently altered, due to comparatively fluent handwriting, toward a fairly cursive script within a short span of time. As numerous school exercises prove, these wooden documents were written by scribes who had enjoyed a professional education. Just as documents on papyrus, leather or even ostraca in the neighbouring civilisations of the Ancient World, they should be designated "manuscripts" – in contrast to the monumental inscriptions intended for public display. Nevertheless, the labels "minuscule inscriptions" and "minuscule script" have widely been applied on these documents in the past.

The majority of these manuscripts, about 700 of which have meanwhile been published, is made up of legal and business documents, among them deeds, quittances, accounts and simple lists, and correspondence by letter. Just as in the inscriptions, the texts make use of formulaic patterns: legal contracts have to follow standard formulae, and letters contain stereotype greetings and blessings. It is needless to say that correspondence particularly creates major problems to modern scholars – because of its partly unknown vocabulary and new stylistic features far beyond the well-known stereotypes from the monumental inscriptions.

Language Contact

Within Ancient South Arabian

As stated before, the inscriptions which are subsumed under the label ASA comprise texts in four different languages. Nevertheless, contacts between speakers of these different languages must have been tight and constant, not least because of the comparatively short distances, and the intensive commercial activities in the region. Since the four languages

are quite different from a linguistic point of view, mutual communication between neighbouring tribes and business partners of different tongues was certainly practised on the basis of multilingualism.

Particularly in the Wadi al-Jawf, a large irrigation valley in the north of Yemen, Sabaeans and Minaeans lived side by side, partly even within one and the same town, from the early first millennium BCE onwards. Consequently, we find some instances for language mixture in everyday documents from there: occasional Minaisms in Sabaic documents and vice versa. A similar situation is found among the Radmān, a tribe settling in the south-eastern part of the Yemeni highlands, at the border between the kingdoms of Saba' and Qatabān. The members of this tribe spoke (and wrote) a particular dialect of Sabaic called "Radmanic" which was affected by influence of the neighbouring Qatabanic language. The extent of Qatabanisms in their inscriptions, however, appears to have depended on the political influence of that neighbour: as long as Qatabān dominated the region, the tribesmen left more inscriptions in more or less "pure" Qatabanic, a fact that could be explained by the respective mother tongue of the scribe which had been installed by the political authorities (Stein 2012a, 47–50).

Outside daily communication, Sabaic appears to have enjoyed reputation as a language of prestige, at least in the earliest periods. In early inscriptions from Qatabān and Ḥaḍramawt, Sabaeisms can regularly be found, for example the stereotype verb *ḥqny* (instead of Qatabanic and Ḥaḍramitic *sqny*) "he dedicated" in numerous votive inscriptions. This could be explained by the assumption that those formulae were adapted, together with the script, on the model of the recently arrived Sabaean elites who brought these skills with them when entering South Arabia.

Ancient South Arabian and Arabic

The far northern part of South Arabia, between the Wadi al-Jawf and the oasis of Najrān, was home to the tribe of 'Amīr, a people famous for camel breeding, who spoke and wrote a particular dialect of Sabaic. This Dialect, conventionally called "North Sabaic" or "Amiritic", was heavily influenced by Arabic: it had only two non-emphatic, unvoiced sibilants (against three in Sabaic), formed 1st and 2nd person perfect verbal forms in *-t* (and not *-k*, as otherwise in ASA), and made use of a negation *lm* connected with a prefix conjugation form for negating expressions in the past. These "Arabisms" are certainly due to a linguistic adstrate from neighbouring tribes to the north, namely in the oasis of Qaryat al-Fāw, who probably spoke (but rarely wrote) some sort of Ancient Arabic.

A strong effect of ASA substrate can be observed in the Yemeni dialect of Arabic. This impact comprises rather specific lexical (such as the negation *da'* or *daw'*, from South Sabaic *d'*) as well as morphological features (the formation of 1st and 2nd person perfect verbal forms in *-k* instead of *-t*, cf. above). According to contemporary Arab authors, a "Ḥimyaritic" language that was completely incomprehensible to native speakers of Arabic was spoken in parts of the country still in the Middle Ages. Judging from the grammatical features referred to by those authors, this "Ḥimyaritic" appears to be an offshoot of Late Sabaic, which must have continued to be spoken in the region even after epigraphic documentation ceased in the late sixth century CE. It is interesting to note that ASA lexical

survivals in Yemeni Arabic mainly concern the semantic fields of agriculture, architecture, and cultural life (Müller 2014).

Furthermore, some cultural terminology in Classical Arabic, particularly in the language of the Qurʾān, is borrowed from Sabaic, for example *fatḥ* "judgment" (cf. Sab. *ftḥ* "judge"), *saṭara* "to write" (Sab. *sṭr* "(same)"), *ṣaḥīfa* "leaf (of a book)" (Sab. *ṣḥft* "written document"), *miḥrāb* "prayer niche" (Sab. *mḥrb* "closet, private chamber in a house"), and probably also *taʾrīḫ* "date" (from Sab. *wrḫ* "month"). Some of these words have previously been claimed to be loans from Geʿez, but they definitely occur in texts from South Arabia much earlier. A South Arabian origin may also be claimed for some central terms from the monotheist religious sphere, such as *ar-raḥmān* "the merciful (epithet of god)" (Sab. *rḥmn-n* "(same)") and perhaps even *allāh* (< *al-ʾilāh*) "(the) God" (Sab. *ʾlh-n* "(same)"). These two names were the common designations of the monotheist deity in South Arabia in the fourth to sixth centuries CE and could for their part have been inspired by Jewish terminology. This lexical impact is certainly caused not only by economic contacts along the incense road, but also by strong political and religious influence from South Arabia, particularly in the sixth century CE (Robin and Ṭayrān 2012).

Ancient South Arabian and Ethiopic

During the Early Sabaic period, a strong Sabaean influence can be noticed in the northernmost part of Ethiopia around the central site of Yeḥā. This influence manifests itself in archaeology and architecture, but also in political, social, and religious structures, as can be detected from the contemporary local inscriptions. The so-called "Ethio-Sabaic" inscriptions, numbering almost 200 texts, are written in ASA script and in the Sabaic language – with some local African interferences (Nebes 2010). This Ethio-Sabaean acculturation process lasted from at least the ninth century up to the mid-first millennium BCE.

Mutual influence between both sides of the Red Sea resurged again during the Axumite period, in the third to sixth centuries CE. Ethiopian rulers adapted once again the South Arabian script and tried to adapt also the language, although the attempts of king ʿEzana (mid-fourth century CE) to imitate Sabaic in his famous trilingual inscriptions may have been motivated more by political ambitions rather than real interest in the language (Sima 2003/2004). Two centuries later, however, the Ethiopian governor in Yemen, ʾAbraha, designating himself "king of Saba'" in the old South Arabian tradition, had his inscriptions set up in the same Sabaic dialect (Late Sabaic) as the South Arabian kings before him.

Generally spoken, it is highly probable that a number of apparent lexical isoglosses between Ethiopic and the languages of the Central-Semitic branch (namely Hebrew and Arabic) could in fact originate in the intermediate South Arabian culture (Kogan 2015, 222–224; Weninger 2004).

Ancient South Arabian and Modern South Arabian

The so-called Modern South Arabian languages, which are spoken till today in the border region between Yemen and Oman and on Socotra, have always been considered as probably close relatives to ASA already because of their topographical situation, and their linguistic relationship with Ethio-Semitic, which lead to their traditional sub-grouping as

South Semitic. Since a common "South Semitic" affiliation of all four ASA languages can no longer be accepted, as we have seen above, the matter needs to be re-investigated. That Modern South Arabian has some features in common with ASA languages, though, is beyond doubt (Watson 2014). The most probable candidate to be an ancestor of Modern South Arabian would certainly be Ḥaḍramitic, or an ancient relative of it, but definitely not Sabaic.

Sketch of Sabaic Grammar

This section provides a basic overview over the most important grammatical aspects of Sabaic as the best documented ASA language. Some remarkable deviations by the three other languages are summarized in a subsequent section below, while a number of dialectal peculiarities have already been noticed in the section on "Language contact" above.

Sabaic Orthography

ASA texts are normally written from right to left. In Early Sabaic inscriptions (but not manuscripts), boustrophedon writing is fairly popular. Word division at the end of a line is usual. Within the text lines, the words are separated from each other by a vertical stroke ("word divider"). The grammatical units separated like this normally consist of a main word (noun, verb, independent pronoun or particle), which may be augmented by clitics: one-consonantal prepositions, enclitic particles, and suffixed pronouns. In transliterations of ASA texts, these clitics are separated from the main word by hyphens, e.g. *šhrm / w-bn-hw / mlkm / bnyy / byt-hmw* "Šahrum and his son Mālikum have built their house". The word divider is often neglected in transliterations (the quoted passage may thus simply be rendered as *šhrm w-bn-hw mlkm bnyy byt-hmw*).

The ASA orthographic system is almost purely consonantal. Short vowels are never indicated (for some exceptions in the non-Sabaic languages see below), long vowels are regularly noted only in final position at the end of a word unit (i.e. before a word divider). The letters *w* and *y* are used as *matres lectionis* for /ū/ and /ī/ (occasionally also/ē/), respectively, but there is no *mater lectionis* for etymological /ā/. Consequently, a word ending in /ā/, such as some dual forms, would be spelled defectively, thus *bny* for /banayā/ "the two of them built", graphically identical with the singular *bny* /banaya/ "he built", but contrasting *bnyw* /banayū/ "they (pl.) built". In the middle of a word unit, in contrast, plene writing of long vowels is totally unusual. Even plural endings before pronominal suffixes are spelled defectively: *bny-hw* (instead of **bnyw-hw*) /banayū-hū/ "they built it".

Needless to say, ASA, as any other Semitic consonantal script, does not express gemination of consonants, nor does it make use of any diacritical signs. The only regular addition to the alphabet are ciphers – abbreviations for cardinal numbers and fractions. These are formed by adaptation of the initial letters of the respective words, e.g. the letter *m* for "100" (from the word *m't* "one hundred").

Sabaic Phonology

Consonants

Sabaic has preserved the proto-Semitic inventory of 29 consonants most completely. Since written documentation gives only few indications for individual articulation of particular phonemes, we abstain from a phonetic table here and give the consonants simply in their alphabetic order as established in the ASA abecedaries from school context:

h l ḥ m q w š r b t s k n ḫ ṣ ś f ʾ ʿ ḏ ǧ d ḏ̣ ṭ z ḍ y ṯ ẓ

Pronunciation of ASA phonemes follows scholarly conventions normally based on Classical Arabic. One has to note that in case of the three non-emphatic, unvoiced sibilants, there is a different tradition of indexing and, hence, pronunciation, than in other Semitic languages. In order to avoid confusion, the reader may refer to the correspondences in Table 18.2:

Table 18.2 Transliteration conventions of sibilants.

ASA transliteration		*Arabic*	*Northwest-Semitic*
traditional	*neutral*		*(e.g., Hebrew)*
s	s^1	*s*	*š*
š	s^2	*š*	*ś*
ś	s^3	*s*	*s*

In the present work, the "traditional" system (Table 18.2, left column) is used for transliterating ASA sibilants.

A characteristic feature of Middle and Late Sabaic is a total assimilation of /n/ to a following consonant, e.g. *bt* "daughter" or *ʾt* "you". In the early period, this feature cannot yet be observed, the particular words are written *bnt* and *ʾnt*, respectively. Another remarkable sound change affects the related phonems /ḍ/ and /ẓ/: while they were consistently separated in the orthography of the monumental inscriptions over the entire span of documentation, the letter *ẓ* fell completely out of use in the daily correspondence on wooden sticks from the Middle Sabaic period onwards. This can be explained by a merger of the two sounds in vernacular speech.

Vowels

Sabaic had certainly the three basic vowels /a/, /i/, and /u/, in both short and long quantity. Furthermore, there is indication for long /ē/ and /ō/, resulting from particular sound shifts. Parallel occurrences of spellings like *byt* and *bt* "house" or *ywm* and *ym* "day" speak for the existence of original diphthongs, which have partly been monophthongized in speech (/bayt/ > /bēt/ and /yawm/ > /yōm/, respectively). Moreover, the defectively spelled dual forms referred to above occur only in Early Sabaic, while they were

replaced by forms ending in *-y* in the later periods (thus *bnyy*, for the dual "the two of them built"), which may be explained by a respective sound shift in speech: /ā/ > /ē/ (thus /banayē/, cf. the Imāla phenomenon in Arabic).

Sabaic Morphology

Noun (Gender, Number, Case, and State)

There are two genders (masculine and feminine) and three numbers (singular, dual and plural) in Sabaic. The regular indicator of feminine gender is an ending *-t*, which remains unchanged in all states. However, there are, as in other languages, a number of feminine words which are not marked by this ending, such as *ʾm* "mother", *ʾrḍ* "land", and *ḥgr* "town".

The dual is productive in all periods of Sabaic, and is normally used without adding the particular numeral, e.g. *ṣlmn* "two statuettes", besides (rarely) *ṯny / ṣlmn* (with numeral and same meaning). It is formed with an ending /-āni/ (nominative) and /-ayni/ (probably monophthongized > /-ēni/, oblique case). The original nominative ending /-āni/ appears to have shifted to /-ēni/ as well in the later periods, thus Early Sabaic *bn* /binā/ against Middle (and Late) Sabaic *bny* /binē/ "the two sons (of …)" (construct state).

The plural has basically two modes of formation: an external or sound plural and an internal or broken plural. The external plural is formed with an ending /-ūna/ (m.), /-ātum/ (f., nominative) and /-īna/ (m.), /-ātim/ (f., oblique). Its use remains restricted to rather few nouns, most of them adjectives and participles. In contrast to this, the internal plural is extensively used in Sabaic and beyond. It is formed by transformation of the stem pattern, using the inflection endings of the singular, thus *ʾrbʿt ʾṣlmm* "four statuettes" (an external plural ***ṣlmn*** **/ṣalmūna/ for this word is not attested).

There are probably three cases in Sabaic: nominative, genitive, and accusative. The respective endings (/u/, /i/, and /a/ in singular) can certainly be assumed between the word stem and the consonantal inflection ending or mimation (cf. below). In the dual and plural, only two cases are distinct: nominative and oblique. The particular endings (/-ā/ and /-ay/, and /-ū/ and /-ī/, respectively) have been deduced from respective spellings of words in significant contexts, e.g., *bnw* "the sons (of …)" (nominative) against *l-bny* "to the sons (of …)" (oblique).

Three states can morphologically be distinguished: construct, indeterminate, and determinate state. The construct state presents the shortest form of a word: it shows only the word stem without inflectional ending in the singular (and internal plural), but with the vocalic case endings in the dual and external masculine plural. It is followed by a word in the genitive denoting possession: *byt mlkn* "the house of the king", *bnw ġdnm* "the descendants of (the clan) Gadanum". The indeterminate state is characterized by the inflectional ending (as in Akkadian or Arabic): *-m* ("mimation") in the singular, internal plural and external feminine plural, and *-n* ("nunation") in the dual and external masculine plural, e.g. *ġlmm w-ṯlṯ bntm* "a boy and three daughters", *ḫmst ḫrfn* "five years". The determinate state has an ending *-n* instead of mimation, and a form *-hn* attached to nunated forms, thus *mlkn* "the king" and *ʾmlkn* "the kings" (contrasting *mlkm* "a king"), and

ṣlmnhn "the two statuettes". This ending of the determinate state, which can probably be traced back to a common form /han/, may be called "definite article". The complete pattern of nominal inflection in the three states as differentiated by the consonantal script is illustrated in Table 18.3:

Table 18.3 Sabaic nominal inflection.

		singular / int. plural	*dual*		*external plural*	
			nominative	*oblique*	*nominative*	*oblique*
construct	m.	*ṣlm*	*ṣlm*, *ṣlm-y*	*ṣlm-y*	*ṣlm-w*	*ṣlm-y*
state	f.	*ṣlm-t*	[*ṣlm-t*], *ṣlm-t-y*	*ṣlm-t-y*	*ṣlm-t*	*ṣlm-t*
indeterminate	m.	*ṣlm-m*	*ṣlm-n*	*ṣlm-n*	*ṣlm-n*	*ṣlm-n*
state	f.	*ṣlm-t-m*	*ṣlm-t-n*	*ṣlm-t-n*	*ṣlm-t-m*	*ṣlm-t-m*
determinate	m.	*ṣlm-n*	*ṣlm-n-hn*	*ṣlm-n-hn*	*ṣlm-n-hn*	*ṣlm-n-hn*
state	f.	*ṣlm-t-n*	*ṣlm-t-n-hn*	*ṣlm-t-n-hn*	*ṣlm-t-n*	*ṣlm-t-n*

Indeed there is a fourth state which is called "absolute". Its formation is apparently similar to the construct state, but its use remains restricted to certain syntactic fields like numerals and adverbial expressions.

Pronouns

The paradigm of the personal pronoun could meanwhile substantially be completed thanks to the progressing analysis of the daily correspondence (Table 18.4):

Table 18.4 Sabaic personal pronouns.

		independent pronoun (nominative)			*enclitic pronoun (genitive / accusative)*		
person		*singular*	*dual*	*plural*	*singular*	*dual*	*plural*
1.	c.	*ʾn*, (*ʾnkʾ*)	–	[ʔ]	*-n* (acc.)	–	*-n*
2.	m.	*ʾnt*, *ʾt*	*ʾntmy*, *ʾtmy*	*ʾntmw*, *ʾtmw*	*-k*	*-kmy*	*-kmw*
	f.	*ʾnt*, *ʾt*		[ʔ]	*-k*		*-kn*
3.	m.	*hʾ*, *hwʾ*	*hmy*	*hmw*	*-hw*	*-hmy*	*-hmw*
	f.	*hʾ*, *hyʾ*		*hn*	*-h*, *-hw*		*-hn*

Note: Alternative entries indicate variation in spelling. In the 2nd person of the independent pronoun, these can be explained by assimilation of *n* (/ʾatta/, thus in the later periods, against Early Sabaic /ʾanta/, etc.). As to the enclitic pronoun of the 3rd person singular, the masculine form *-hw* is often used also in feminine context in Middle Sabaic inscriptions.

There are two forms of demonstratives. One is formed on a basis *ḏ*, indicating the nearer deixis, thus *ḏn* and *ḏt* "this", plural *ʾln* and *ʾlt* "these" (m. and f., respectively). The other is identical with the 3rd person independent personal pronoun, however inflecting

for two cases, and indicates remoter deixis: *hʾ* (m. and f.) "the aforementioned, that", plural *hmw* and *hn* "those" (m. and f., nominative); *hwt* and *hyt*, plural *hmt* and *hnt* (m. and f., respectively, oblique). For syntactic use, cf. *w-tškr hʾ ʾsn* "that man was defeated" (nominative) against *b-hyt hgrn* "in that city" (genitive) and *w-yḥrbw hmt ʾḥbšn* "and they fought (against) those Abyssinians" (accusative).

The relative pronoun inflects for two cases as well: while the forms of singular and feminine plural are graphically not distinctive (singular m. *ḏ-*, f. *ḏt*; plural f. *ʾlt*), the masculine plural differentiates between a nominative form *ʾlw* and an oblique *ʾly*. Apart from this, there is an unchangeable relative *ḏ-* which may be used in all contexts irrespective of gender and number of its antecedent.

Verb

The system of Sabaic verbal stem formation has been clarified only recently (Multhoff 2011). The Sabaic system of derived stems can be summarized as follows (Table 18.5):

Table 18.5 Sabaic verbal stem formation.

basic stems				*T-stems*			
	perfect	*imperfect*	*infinitive*		*perfect*	*imperfect*	*infinitive*
0_1	*fʿl*	*yfʿl*	*fʿl*	T_1	*tfʿl*	*yftʿl*	*ftʿln*
0_2	*fʿl*	*yfʿl*	*fʿln*	T_2	*tfʿl*	*ytfʿl*	*tfʿln*
H	*hfʿl*	*yhfʿl*	*hfʿln*	ST	*stfʿl*	*ystfʿl*	*stfʿln*

0_1 is the base stem or "Grundstamm" (G or Qal, /faʿala/), 0_2 the unaugmented derived stem probably with geminating second radical (D or "doubled" stem, /faʿʿala/). T_1 and T_2 are the corresponding reflexive stems to these, marked by a prefixed element *t*. Strangely enough, this element is partly prefixed, and partly infixed in one and the same stem T_1, a unique feature of Sabaic which could possibly be traced back to proto-Semitic (Weninger 2011, 157). The stem named H is the classical "causative". Apart from these graphical distinctions, an internal passive can be assumed, which can only semantically be determined, e.g. *wld* "he was born" against *wldt* "she has born". The existence of further stems such as L ("lengthened", */fāʿala/) or N (**nfʿl*) in Sabaic can certainly be denied.

Verbal inflection distinguishes between a suffix conjugation or perfect, and a prefix conjugation, or imperfect. The latter is often augmented by an ending *-n* (or *-nn* in the dual and plural), which had lead to a distinction between two different conjugations in the past: a "short" versus a "long" imperfect. However, the morphological basis of all imperfect forms (in the base stem 0_1) is uniformly /yifʿVl/ (Nebes 1994), and there is basically no semantic distinction between augmented and unaugmented forms. The suffixed *-n* is certainly some deictic element parallel to the ventive in Akkadian or the energic in Arabic, without a functional impact on the verb proper. Table 18.6 collects all perfect and imperfect forms as far as established from the textual evidence. The third column shows the graphical difference of the imperfect forms with suffixed *-n*.

Table 18.6 Sabaic verbal inflection in the base stem 0_1.

			perfect	*imperfect*	
					with suffixed –n
singular	3.	m.	*fʿl*	*y-fʿl*	*y-fʿl-n*
		f.	*fʿl-t*	*t-fʿl*	*t-fʿl-n*
	2.	m.	*fʿl-k*	*t-fʿl*	*t-fʿl-n*
		f.	*fʿl-k*	*t-fʿl-nꜣ*	*t-fʿl-nꜣ*
	1.	c.	*fʿl-k*	*ʾfʿl*	[ʔ]
dual	3.	m.	*fʿl, fʿl-y*	*y-fʿl, y-fʿl-y*	*y-fʿl-nn*
		f.	*fʿl-t, fʿl-t-y*	[ʔ]	*t-fʿl-nn*
	2.	c.	*fʿl-kmy*	[ʔ]	*t-fʿl-nn*
plural	3.	m.	*fʿl-w*	*y-fʿl-w*	*y-fʿl-nn*
		f.	*fʿl, fʿl-y*	*t-fʿl-n, y-fʿl-n*	*t-fʿl-nn*
	2.	m.	*fʿl-kmw*	[ʔ]	*t-fʿl-nn*
		f.	*fʿl-kn*	[ʔ]	[ʔ]
	1.	c.	*fʿl-n*	[ʔ]	[ʔ]

Note: Alternative entries indicate variation in spelling. In the dual endings, different spellings are caused by sound changes (/ā/ > /ē/) similarly to those of the noun. The 3rd person plural feminine perfect can likewise be traced back to original /faʿalā/. In the imperfect of the same person, both forms with prefixed *t-* and *y-* are attested.

Infinitive formation in Sabaic is specific. While the infinitive of the base stem 0_1 remains in its bare form (*fʿl*), the infinitives of all derived stems are augmented by *-n*, thus *fʿln* (0_2), *hfʿln* (H), *ftʿln* (T_1) and so forth. This feature, which is not yet productive in Early Sabaic, allows a morphological distinction between the otherwise identically spelled verbal stems 0_1 and 0_2.

Particles

Sabaic makes broad use of enclitic particles. Very specific is an enclitic *-n* which is attached to prepositions in order to invert their meaning to the opposite direction, e.g. *ʿl-n* "down" or *ʿm-n* "from", in contrast to *ʿl(y)* "on (top of)" and *ʿm* "(together) with", respectively. Also, the widely used prepositions *b-n* and *l-n*, both meaning "from", can be explained this way (derived from the respective basic forms *b-* "in, at, by" and *l-* "to, for").

Sabaic Syntax

Word Order

Though the common Semitic word order Verb – Subject – Object (VSO) is the rule also in Sabaic, there is a tendency in both inscriptions and manuscripts to place an element different from the predicate in front of a clause. This change in word order serves the purpose of either focus (thus mainly at the beginning of an inscription to highlight its protagonist) or topicalization (in order to structure a longer text). Cf. text-initial *yṯʿmr bn ykrbmlk bny* "Yiṯaʿamar,

son of Yakrubmalik, (and nobody else!) has built (this house)" against interior *w-ṣtr ṣṭrk f-mḏ² w-²nt f-²k* "The letter you wrote has arrived. And you, send (…)!" from a piece of correspondence. In the latter example, each clause with inverted word order introduces a new item of the message. The transition from the fronted element to the remaining clause marked by the conjunction *f-* is quite characteristic in these constructions (Nebes 1995).

Use of Tenses

Besides some basic functions found elsewhere in Semitic (perfect for past actions, and imperfect for future), there is a specific use of imperfect forms denoting progressive past actions in narrative contexts (quite parallel to Hebrew *way-yiqṭol*): *w-yhrgw kl hmt ²sdn* "and they killed all those men". Unlike the Hebrew parallel, the verb may not be in initial position here (cf. the preceding paragraph): *w-bn ḫgrn nᶜḍ f-yt²wlw ᶜdy ḫgrn ṣnᶜw* "and from the city of Naᶜḍ they returned to the city of Ṣanᶜāw".

Infinitive Construction

Another striking phenomenon of Sabaic syntax is the use of infinitives replacing finite verbs of closely related actions, such as *br²w w-hwṯrn w-hšqrn byt-hmw nᶜmn* "they have built, namely founded and finished, their house Nuᶜmān" (while the initial verb is finite, the two following are infinitives, as can clearly be seen from their specific ending). These "infinitive chains" are often construed in whole paronomastic figures with corresponding antecedents: *kl sl²t w-ḍby² w-tqdmt sl²y w-ḍb² w-tqdmn* "all the marches, campaigns, and attacks they marched, campaigned and attacked" (the subject is in dual here).

Relative Clauses

As can be seen in the last-mentioned example, an attributive relative clause may be attached to one or more nouns in the construct state. Besides these asyndetic clauses there are also relative clauses introduced by a relative pronoun, such as *lfᶜṯt … ḥqny … ²lmqh … ṯlṯtn ²ṣlmn ²ly ḏhbn ḏ-šft-hw* "Laffᶜaṯt … has dedicated … to (the god) ²Almaqah … the three statuettes of bronze which he had promised to him" (while the genitive attribute "of bronze" makes use of the inflecting relative pronoun, the subordinate clause has the neutral *ḏ-*).

Some Features of the Non-Sabaic Languages

This section summarizes but a few important characteristics of the three other ASA languages. For a more detailed compilation, the reader may refer to Nebes and Stein (2004), Stein (2011), and Multhoff (2019).

Orthography

In numerous instances, a letter *h* is found in positions inside a word where it can only represent a (long or even short) vowel, e.g., Minaic *²nṯhtn* "the women" and *²hnk* "I" (personal pronoun), and Qatabanic *nfšhy-sm* "their chambers". The strict orthographic rules of vowel notation in Sabaic (see above) are certainly not valid to the same extent here.

Phonology

Ḥaḍramitic appears to lack the interdental fricatives /ḏ/ and /ṯ/, which have been merged with the corresponding sibilants /z/ and /ś/. Since the Ḥaḍramites had adapted the complete inventory of the ASA script, however, the particular letters frequently occur in the texts (such as in the numeral for "three", spelled *šlṯt* in earlier orthography, but *šlśt* in later texts).

Morphology

The pattern of nominal inflection is principally comparable with that of Sabaic, in spite of some differences in the spelling of dual and plural endings. A marked deviation must be noticed in Minaic inasmuch the indeterminate inflection ending (mimation) seems not to have been a productive grammatical feature there.

In contrast to Sabaic, pronouns are generally formed with the element *s* instead of *h*, thus enclitic *-s* (with variants *-sw*, *-syw*, etc.), *-sm*, and *-sn* for 3rd person singular and plural (m. and f.) forms. The same applies to the demonstrative, attested, for instance, in the oblique forms *swt* (singular) and *smt* (plural) for the remote deixis in Qatabanic.

Verbal stem formation in Minaic differs completely from Sabaic. Besides the common 0_1, 0_2 and S (for Sabaic H), and the corresponding T-stems, Minaic exhibits reduplicating stems for all these categories, thus *fʿʿl* (0_3), *sfʿʿl* (S_3), *ftʿʿl* (T_3), and *stfʿʿl* (ST_3). This rather complex system strongly reminds of Ethio-Semitic. The evidence for Qatabanic and Ḥaḍramitic is still meagre, but reduplicating stems do definitely not occur. The particular feature of infinitive formation in Sabaic (see above) is not shared by the other languages, though a suffix *-m* may be attached to infinitives in certain syntactic positions in Qatabanic.

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PART III

ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN LANGUAGES USED AS ADMINISTRATIVE LANGUAGES OR *LINGUAE FRANCAE*

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Akkadian as a *Lingua Franca*[1]

Juan Pablo Vita

As René Labat has noted: "there are languages that seem to have the vocation of universality in their destiny. Undoubtedly, Akkadian was the first of them" (Labat 1962, 1). In fact, throughout the second millennium BCE Akkadian, an east Semitic language with a history going back more than two thousand years (Kouwenberg 2011, 330–332; Streck 2011a, 2011b), expanded in its written form well beyond its original Mesopotamian frontiers. Accordingly, it is usually considered that, in the course of that millennium, this language was used as a *lingua franca* in the Ancient Near East by a large number of countries.

A *lingua franca* is considered to be a language of wider communication, "that is, a language that is used for communication between groups who do not speak each other's languages, as well as between native speakers (if any) of the lingua franca and other groups", English being "a (or the) worldwide modern lingua franca" (Thomason 2001, 269). The term literally means "Frankish language", "that is, the language of the Franks, a German-speaking people who also gave their name to France after invading and conquering it in the early Middle Ages. The original Lingua Franca was spoken in the Eastern Mediterranean at the time of the Crusades" (*id.*, *ibid.*).

As will become apparent throughout this chapter, the modern definition of *lingua franca* seems to be reasonably suitable for the Akkadian of the second millennium BCE. However, it gained this status after a long, slow process whose roots are probably to be found in previous millennia and in which political, economic, and cultural factors played a part. The very physical geography of Mesopotamia favoured its early contact with other regions of the Ancient Near East. One of the key stages in the process must be sought, in all likelihood, in the mid-fourth millennium, with the expansion of the culture of Uruk beyond the borders of Mesopotamia, both towards the east (Iran) and the north (Syria and Anatolia) (van de Mieroop 2016, 21–43; Butterlin 2015, 489–490). In southern

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Mesopotamia, the Late Uruk period was crucial in the formation of most of the elements that distinguished later Near Eastern cultures such as the cuneiform script or the development of bureaucratic tools for the state to run its administration efficiently (van de Mieroop 2016, 37; Englund 2015, 448). In Syria, the direct impact of the culture of Uruk is clearly evident in settlements such as Habuba Kabira and elsewhere, leading to the assumption that they were founded by southern immigrants. The Mesopotamian culture of Uruk interacted directly with local Syrian cultures, accelerating cultural processes that they had already set in motion, although, in general, the specific mechanisms and forms of such interactions are disputed.

Because its geographical borders were much more open than in other regions of the Ancient Near East, Mesopotamia also tended to expand by waging war. A good example of this trend, found already in the third millennium, is found in the military campaigns of the Akkadian kings both towards regions of western Iran and towards the north of Syria, where they destroyed such important political centres as Mari and Ebla. These were raids with the ultimate aim of controlling trade routes and access to natural resources, but they also resulted in the Mesopotamian cuneiform script and Akkadian language to become widespread in Elam and Assyria, the Middle Euphrates and northern Syria (van de Mieroop 2016, 71; De Graef 2013). Although it still remains controversial, it is probable that the texts from Ebla, an important Syrian kingdom in the second half of the third millennium, were also written in an Akkadian dialect (Streck 2011a, 351).

It is also quite likely that, on the road to becoming a *lingua franca*, Akkadian went through purely oral phases after which came various types of mixed languages that were never written down. A good example may be provided by the situation seen in the Assyrian settlement of Kanesh, in Anatolia. Towards the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century BCE, Assyrian traders from Assur settled in various towns in central Anatolia looking for trade based principally on metals and textiles (Michel 2014a, 117–119). Its centre of operations was Kanesh (modern Kültepe), from which have come thousands of documents, chiefly letters (Michel 2001). Here, there was direct contact between an Anatolian people speaking a non-Semitic language and a foreign population speaking Semitic (in the variant of Akkadian called "Old Assyrian"). The archaeological plan of the lower city has residential areas in which both sets of inhabitants lived together with no physical separation of any kind (Michel 2014b, 75). Daily contact between both communities was intense, since, in addition, all the Assyrians and some of the Anatolians were merchants, and mixed marriages were on the increase. In such circumstances it can be assumed that bilingualism was customary among merchants (Michel 2011, 111; 2014b, 77), but it is also likely that this social context favoured the development of a mixed language of some kind strongly imbued with Akkadian. This language has left no record because there was no need to write it down. The main purpose of letters from Assyrian merchants in Kanesh was contact with their associates and relatives in Assur, so that, although they inserted some Anatolian words (and also from other linguistic origins; Schwemer 2005–2006, 221–224; Dercksen 2007), the language that had to be used is Old Assyrian. Some sort of mixed language with a strong Akkadian component could also have been used in dealing with other foreign traders who came to Kanesh from Syria and Upper Mesopotamia (Eblaites, Babylonians, Amorites, Hurrians; Michel 2014a, 126–128; 2014b, 72), areas where Akkadian was already used in local administration

(see below). However, at the level of writing and outside the narrow circle of Assyrian traders, the Anatolian traders who used the Mesopotamian cuneiform script also wrote in the Old Assyrian dialect, without attempting to adapt this script to their own language (Michel 2011, 112; 2014a, 128; 2014b, 77). The final result of the social presence of Akkadian, but especially the dominance of Old Assyrian in writing, was that this Akkadian dialect became the diplomatic language used in the various Anatolian courts (where interpreters were occasionally engaged; Michel 2014a, 126, 128; 2014b, 77), so functioning as the *lingua franca* of diplomacy at a regional level. However, the departure at the end of the eighteenth century BCE of the Assyrian merchants who had been involved in long-distance trade also meant the disappearance from Anatolia of cuneiform writing until its reintroduction later (see below).

Beyond Anatolia, Akkadian gained the status of the language used for diplomacy in the Ancient Near East in the first half of this second millennium BCE, in the period of the Amorite kingdoms or the "Mari period" (Old Babylonian period), a status it retained for several centuries. In the early centuries of the second millennium, international politics was marked by direct interaction between various states that dominated politically and militarily, chiefly Babylonia, Larsa, Ešnunna and Assyria in Mesopotamia, Mari, Yamhad and Qatna in Syria, and Elam in (South West) Iran. The political and military alliances between these states succeeded each other in various combinations (Yamhad, Ešnunna and Babylonia against Assyria, Mari and Qatna, later alliances of Yamhad, Mari and Babylonia, etc.; Charpin and Ziegler 2003), largely resulting in a period of great political fragmentation. As the archives from Mari show (Durand 1997, 1998, 2000; Sasson 2015), this fragmentation was connected with intense diplomatic and commercial activity that involved the dominant kingdoms but also included a whole series of smaller and secondary kingdoms. The large geographical area covered by these relations necessarily implied a continuous interaction, by word and in writing, of persons, administrations and royal courts speaking various languages and dialects, as reflected in the archives of Mari. As a result, problems of language communication must inevitably have arisen, in speech and in writing, for which a solution had to be found.

A letter from Mari (A.3823), sent by the Assyrian prince Yasmaḫ-Addu (governor of Mari) to his father Samsī-Addu (king of Assyria) about an impending census of nomads, provides an example of the problem of oral communication. The prince writes: "My lord has written to me as follows: You are unable to speak to them in Amorite! You should not go! Send Lā'ûm, Mut-Bisir and Māšum so that they can report!' However, I will learn Amorite" (Ziegler and Charpin 2007). Situations of this kind require the presence of an interpreter. In fact, and quite naturally, the multiplicity of languages and of every kind of contact between kingdoms and peoples of the Ancient Near East favoured the existence of bilingual speakers or even polyglots who could act as interpreters (Sum. eme-bal, Akk. *targumannu*; Starke 1993; Ulshöfer 2007; Durand 2012, 169; García Trabazo 2014). A letter (A.109) from the Syrian kingdom of Ašlakka and found in Mari, for example, mentions with admiration a trilingual messenger: "This man masters [the language] of the Akkadians, the Amorites and the Hurrians!" (Ziegler and Charpin 2007, 59, 62; Charpin 2016, 27; Durand 2012, 168).

The multiplicity of languages and dialects required a *lingua franca* also at the level of writing. The Mari archives show that the cuneiform script used in its administration was

radically reformed in the nineteenth century BCE under the influence of Ešnunna, a direct result of the political hegemony of this kingdom over north Mesopotamia towards the end of this century. In fact, the reform affected the whole of the Middle Euphrates and Upper Mesopotamia (except for Aššur), with the result that towards the end of the nineteenth century BCE, the Akkadian of Ešnunna gained the status of a written *lingua franca* in the Ancient Near East (Durand 2012; Charpin 2012). Later, in the eighteenth century BCE, the Old Babylonian script and dialect used by the administration of Mari had a direct influence on Palestine, as shown by the texts from Hazor (Horowitz, Oshima and Sanders 2018, 63–88). There is evidence for direct political contacts between Mari and Hazor from the period of king Zimri-Lim of Mari (Ziegler and Charpin 2007, 196), very probably when cuneiform writing and Akkadian were introduced into Palestine as tools for written exchange (Horowitz, Oshima and Sanders 2018, 13).

The golden age of Akkadian as a *lingua franca* and the language of diplomacy in the Ancient Near East lasted throughout the second half of the second millennium BCE (Middle Babylonian period; van Soldt 2011, 405; Streck 2011b, 376; Márquez Rowe 2006, 140–166), especially during the so-called "Amarna period" (fourteenth century BCE) and until *ca.* the twelfth century BCE. The geographical boundaries of international relations in the preceding "Mari period" were now considerably extended and incorporated Egypt, Palestine, Anatolia and the eastern Mediterranean. The great political powers of this period (Egypt, Babylonia, Hatti, and occasionally Mittani and Assyria) were intertwined by means of close and continuous diplomatic contacts, forming a group whose members accepted each other as belonging to the category of "Great Kings". The political and personal relationships among these kings were determined by clearly established diplomatic protocols (Liverani 1990, 2000; Bryce 2003; van de Mieroop 2016, 137–151). Interpreters continued to play an important role in this context, some of them acquiring prestige and recognition (Meier 1988, 163–165).

In general, the roots of the "Amarna system" lie in the preceding "Mari period", in which diplomatic procedures had been established as well as the essential elements of the political and juridical terminology that had already been fully mature in the second half of the millennium (Liverani 1999, 311; Lafont 2001, 56). On the whole, and in spite of very different international backgrounds, both periods shared important aspects in how these states managed their foreign affairs. They resulted in generally stable geopolitical structures based on the development of reliable systems of international relations based on intense diplomatic activity (Lafont 2001, 41, 56) and in which Akkadian had an essential role.

The huge number of administrative texts found in Mari (Charpin 2008, 244–247), the few but important texts of this kind written in Hazor (Horowitz, Oshima and Sanders 2018, 72–74, 79, 83, 85; Durand 2006), as well as important archives from north of Mesopotamia (e.g. Nuzi), Syria–Palestine (e.g. Ugarit, Emar, Alalaḫ), Anatolia (Ḫattuša) (van Soldt 2011) and Elam (Veldhuis 2014, 304–305; De Graef 2013) show that Akkadian was also used throughout the second millennium as a local administrative language outside Mesopotamian areas where it was indigenous.

The main channels through which Akkadian spread towards the Eastern and Western Periphery were essentially schools for scribes, which at certain moments and in certain locations could count on the presence of indigenous professors, both Babylonian and Assyrian. As aptly summarised by Cohen (2009, 47) for the Western Periphery, "Scribes

and scholars from Anatolia, Syria, Canaan, and Egypt copied, studied, and translated in scribal schools Mesopotamian lexical lists, omens, and incantations along with belles lettres, such as myths and epics. This curriculum formed their scribal education of reading and writing in a tongue different from their own and, at a later stage, provided them their technical literature, which assisted them in their professional practices such as divination, magic, and medicine". A Mesopotamian literary work of the calibre of the Gilgameš Epic was copied at least in Boğazköy, Ugarit, Emar and Megiddo and was also translated into Hittite and Hurrian (George 2003, 24, 306–347; Anthonioz 2015).

The impact of Mesopotamian schools and culture on the Western Periphery is quite evident in various archives in Syria–Palestine and Anatolia in the late Bronze Age, as well as in contemporary Egypt (Veldhuis 2014, 269; Müller 2010). In Ugarit, for example, there were scribes from Babylonia, Assyria and Hurrian speaking areas (van Soldt 1995, 179, 182; 2012, 172–177). The site has provided a considerable number of lexical texts, almost all of them written in that city and used for teaching Sumerian and Akkadian, although teaching material was also imported directly from Assyria and Babylonia (van Soldt 1995; Veldhuis 2014, 297–299; Arnaud 2007, 7–11). This material allows us to reconstruct, to some extent, the scholastic curriculum developed there (van Soldt 1995, 174; 2016; Fincke 2012, 91–92; Roche-Hawley 2015). It shows that although the lexical tradition followed in Ugarit was not the same as in Nippur (van Soldt 1995, 182), in general it certainly seemed to follow the curriculum of Mesopotamian towns in the Old Babylonian period such as Uruk or Sippar Amnanum (Veldhuis 2016). In turn, this curriculum, originating in or inspired by Mesopotamia, directly influenced the organization of teaching the local cuneiform alphabetic script and Ugaritic language, such that the alphabetical scribal curriculum was calqued from the Mesopotamian curriculum exactly as it was organized in Ugarit itself, although the content was distinctly local (Hawley 2008, 61; Roche-Hawley and Hawley 2013, 255–264; van Soldt 2016, 150–151).

School material similar to that of Ugarit has been found in places such as, for example, the imperial capital Ḫattuša (Veldhuis 2014, 271–279), probably with the presence of some Babylonian and Assyrian scribes (Beckman 1983; a topic nuanced by Weeden 2011a, 604; 2016, 160–163). Another example is the Syrian town of Emar (Cohen 2009, 51–64, 239–243; 2012; 2016; Veldhuis 2014, 280–297), where at least one scribe from North Babylonia or the Mid-Euphrates region has been identified, who assisted in the formation of local scribes (Cohen 2009, 183–189). Marginal to the political role of these towns, the scholastic material they provide shows the presence of one or more important scribal schools in the Mesopotamian tradition. Allowing for local adaptations, generally speaking, Ugarit, Ḫattuša and Emar produced similar scholarly works (Fincke 2012). This production also had close relations in respect of transmitting texts and their interrelationships, all of which indicates a fairly uniform school curriculum in the Syro-Anatolian area, although with local peculiarities (Cohen 2009, 241–242; Fincke 2012, 98–99; Veldhuis 2014, 270, 278; Viano 2016). In addition, the Mesopotamian material was adapted significantly to local requirements. In this way, for example, in Ugarit columns were added in Hurrian and Ugaritic to the polyglot Syllable Vocabulary A (S^a Voc.), the languages of students (van Soldt 1995, 175; e.g. [sign] nu: [Akk.] *a-bu* : [Hurr.] *at-ta-ni* : [Ug.] *a-da-nu* "father").

The Mesopotamian school tradition is very evident also in Palestine, the examples being few but eloquent (Horowitz, Oshima and Sanders 2018; Cohen 2019). The discovery in

Hazor of a prism fragment datable to the Middle Bronze Age, containing part of a combined multiplication table and created *in situ* (Horowitz, Oshima and Sanders 2018, 75–77) is a strong indication of the possible presence there of a scribal school in this period. Later, a liver model fragment from the late Middle-Bronze Age and a school tablet with an excerpt from Urra = ḫubullu from the Late Bronze Age (Horowitz, Oshima and Sanders 2018, 64–66, 70–72) show that, in effect, Hazor had a school of scribes throughout the second millennium (Cohen 2008, 83; 2009, 48). In reality, Hazor continued a scribal tradition begun in Canaan at Byblos, where a syllabary was found that had been written in the third millennium BCE (Cavigneaux 1980–1983, 618). The school of Hazor was open to outside influence: some palaeographic traces of a multiplication table connect this text directly with the scribal tradition of Mari (Horowitz 1997, 195) and the excerpt from Urra = ḫubullu is a western parallel of the type already known from Ugarit and Emar (Horowitz, Oshima and Sanders 2018, 71). Similarly, there is another excerpt from Urra = ḫubullu found in Ashkelon, which matches the Emar version exactly (Horowitz, Oshima and Sanders 2018, 40–41). However, as in Ugarit and other peripheral sites, in Canaan they also made the necessary adaptations of the material to local teaching requirements. The most relevant in this respect is a fragment of a lexical text found in Aphek (thirteenth century BCE; Horowitz, Oshima and Sanders 2018, 29–30), where the five preserved lines reveal that the text was arranged in three columns: the first for the Sumerian term, the second for the Akkadian version and the third for the version in the local (Northwest Semitic) language (e.g. [Sum.] gešti]n.meš : [Akk.] *ka-ra-nu* : [NWS] *ye-nu* "wine"). It could be accepted that centres of cuneiform literacy existed in several other city-states of Canaan from the Middle Bronze Age to the close of the Late Bronze Age (Tadmor 1977, 101–102), as well as the sporadic presence of foreign scribes in the area (Vita 2015a, 144). In the case of Elam, the school texts mostly derived from Babylonian examples, but also contain innovative elements produced locally (Veldhuis 2014, 305, 311).

Following some of the paths towards language contact identified by modern linguistics (Thomason 2001, 17–21), as Akkadian expanded beyond the geographical area where it was spoken, it came into contact with both Semitic and non-Semitic languages, that is to say, related and unrelated languages (on these linguistic situations see Epps, Huehnergard and Pat-El 2013). These languages were often spoken by societies that had not previously developed a writing system of their own. Given the new situation, as already mentioned, at times extra-Mesopotamian scribes adopted the Mesopotamian cuneiform script to write texts only in Akkadian. On other occasions, they used the Mesopotamian script to write texts both in Akkadian and in the local language. In both cases Akkadian became imbued, in various degrees, with the diverse local languages it came into direct contact with (van Soldt 2011; von Dassow 2010; Streck 2011b, 366–367, 376–378). From this viewpoint, Akkadian has also been the subject of study in linguistic analyses focused on contact languages (e.g. Thomason 2001, 6, 89; Márquez Rowe 2004; Johanson 2013; Beaulieu 2013). A significant result of this process was that, quite often, the Mesopotamian cuneiform script and Akkadian acted as a sort of "contrast medium", bringing to light languages which had not been recorded in writing up until that moment and which otherwise would probably have gone totally unnoticed. In Mesopotamia itself that is the case of, for example, Kassite, a language spoken by a tribal people recorded in the Mesopotamian sources from the 18th cent. BCE and of unknown linguistic affiliation (Schneider 2003).

Kassite Babylonian texts show that Babylonian society of the period assimilated people from various regions of the Ancient Near East as well as speakers of various languages, including Elamites and Hurrians (Sassmannshausen 2001, 130–151). However, language contact with these last two communities was much more significant beyond the borders of Mesopotamia. Towards the east, Elam was one of Mesopotamia's most important neighbours. The most significant indigenous language of the region was Elamite, agglutinative in type and of disputed genetic affiliation. With a history of some two thousand years, it was written down by means of various writing systems and for centuries was used alongside Akkadian and Sumerian (Stolper 2004; Krebernik 2005). The Mesopotamian script and the Akkadian language were introduced into the western part of the region towards the end of the third millennium BCE, after Sargon of Akkad conquered Susa and Elam. From this moment and for various reasons, relations between Akkadian and Elamite fluctuated depending on historical context, internal politics, literary genre, etc. Generally speaking, it can be said that Akkadian as a written language predominated in Elam throughout the first half of the second millennium BCE, and that, conversely, Elamite gained the upper hand in the second half of that millennium, a time when Akkadian dominated as a *lingua franca* in the rest of the Ancient Near East. However, each historical period displays its own peculiar profile that must be analysed in detail (Malbran-Labat 1996; De Graef 2013). At the lexical level, dictionaries of Akkadian include just over 60 terms identified as of Elamite origin, for example *kudurru* "boundary stone", *sukkir* "king" or *šanukatu* "queen" (Krebernik 2006, 83–91). In the reverse direction, Elamite took several terms referring to buildings and their components from Akkadian, especially in a cultic context, for example *kukunnum* "raised temple" (< Akk. *gegunnûm* < Sum. ge-gun$_4$-na) or *za/ikratume* (< *ziqqurratum*) "ziqqurrat, temple tower" (Malbran-Labat 1996, 48; Krebernik 2006, 92–93; Streck 2011b, 388). On the whole, in spite of their long coexistence, neither language deeply influenced the other, probably because contact was limited essentially to the top levels of society and to the schools, while the ordinary people continued to speak mainly Elamite (De Graef 2013, 273–274).

Towards the north, the linguistic interrelations between Akkadian and Hurrian went much deeper. The Hurrians formed one of the most important civilizations of the Ancient Near East, expanding from the region of the Lower Zab (east of the Tigris) as far as north Syria and south-east Anatolia (Giorgieri 2013). Hurrian is an agglutinative and ergative language belonging to the Hurro-Urartian family, unrelated to the Semitic and Afro-Asiatic languages (Giorgieri 2000; Wegner 2007; Wilhelm 2008). It still poses great problems of interpretation, especially at the lexical level (Richter 2012a). The oldest known inscription in Hurrian is from Tell Mozan (ancient Urkeš, north Syria) and can be dated towards the end of the third millennium BCE. However, here the texts were usually written in Sumerian and Akkadian, indicative of the strong influence of Mesopotamian cultural traditions on Hurrian civilization already in the third millennium. Texts in Hurrian increased and spread significantly, especially throughout the whole second half of the second millennium (Mittani, Syria, Anatolia, Egypt), its maximum expansion corresponding to the zenith of the kingdom of Mittani, in about the fourteenth century BCE (Giorgieri 2005). The deep differences in language between Akkadian and Hurrian prevented the Hurrian scribes from being able to adopt the Akkadian syllabary directly, instead having to make a series of adaptations that indicate careful forethought regarding

the problems (phonetic and others) involved (Giorgieri 2005, 89–91; van Soldt 2010, 117–122). The result was the development of a variant of Akkadian that was strongly influenced by Hurrian on several levels (phonology, morphology, syntax, lexicon) and is called "Hurro-Akkadian" (Giorgieri, 2005: 92–97; Oliva 2016, 141–143), observable especially in the archives of Nuzi (Wilhelm 1970), Alalaḫ (Márquez Rowe 1998; von Dassow 2012) and Qaṭna. A small set of letters found in Qaṭna, written in the second half of the fourteenth century and from areas between Alalaḫ and Qaṭna known in ancient times as Ni'a and Nuhašše (in Syria), provide a good example of extent of the interaction between both languages. The evidence strongly suggests that this type of Hurro-Akkadian can be viewed as a semi-advanced mixed language, even more than exhibited by the texts from Nuzi and Alalaḫ. In these texts, almost every "sentence" in the Akkadian frame code contains some Hurrian traits, into which Hurrian verbs could be inserted directly (*ù šu-nu-ti iš-tu qa-ti* kúr$^{na\text{-}ak\text{-}ri}$-*šu-nu* : eḫ-lu-ša$_{10}$-ap "And *I have saved* [two idols] from the hands of their enemies"), Hurrian translation glosses (^{I}*ḫa-an-nu-ut-ti it-ti* nam.ra.meš : ša$_{10}$-ri-ni-ra *i-ti-iq* "Ḫannutti passed by with the booty : *booty*") or mixed Hurro-Akkadian verbal forms in which the "deep" structure of these composites mirrors the structure of the Hurrian verb (*at-tù-nu-ma lu-ú i-mar$_6$-ku-nu* : wu-ri-ta-áš-šu$_{11}$ "you will see") (Richter 2005a, 114; Richter 2012b, 30; Andrason and Vita 2016, 308–316). In the opposite direction, Hurrian texts show the inclusion of some Akkadian terms from various semantic fields, for example construction (e.g. *ḫirīdi* "hole, ditch" < Akk. *ḫirītu* "ditch, canal"), administration (e.g. *ḫalzi* "administrative district" < Akk. *ḫalṣu* "fortress"), weights and measures (*šiklade* "1 shekel" < Akk. *šiqlu* "shekel") and others (Neu 1997; Streck 2011b, 388).

Akkadian also interacted with Hittite, the most significant language of the Anatolian branch of the Indo-European language family (Rieken 2015). The cuneiform script used in Anatolia during the period of Assyrian commercial presence (see above) had no continuity with the script used in later centuries, but was reintroduced from a source located somewhere north of Syria. Although the possibility poses questions (Weeden 2011b, 65–70; 2016, 160), the ductus of Akkadian texts from level VII of the city of Alalaḫ in Syria is a serious candidate for the source of Hittite cuneiform, as a result of Hattusili I's and Mursili I's campaigns to northern Syria during the second half of the eighteenth cent. BCE (van den Hout 2012). Once adopted, the Hittite scribes had to apply a strong process of adaptation of this writing to their own language (Weeden 2011a, 608–610; Popova 2015). At the linguistic level, reciprocal influences between Akkadian and Hittite were fairly sporadic (Schwemer 2005–2006; Streck 2011b, 388; Dardano 2012). Both languages share several terms for names of minerals, plants, various utensils, etc., most of which can be considered as *Wanderwörter*. Lexical loans from Hittite in Akkadian are quite rare after the period of Kanesh (see above) and, generally, Hittite influence is much weaker also at the level of structural and semantic calques. Influence in the other direction was slightly stronger and is evident in some direct lexical loans from Akkadian to Hittite, for example, *tuppi-* "(inscribed) tablet" (< Akk. *ṭuppum* < Sum. dub) and some terms for professions such as *apiši-* (< Akk. *āšipu* "exorcist", with metathesis) or *šankunni-* (< Akk. *šangûm* "chief administrator of a temple" < Sum. sanga). It is also possible to identify some structural calques (e.g. the adverbial construction *anišiu̯at* "today" = *ana-* "each, this" + *šiu̯at* "day" < Akk. *ūma annīta* "today", "this day"), whereas semantic calques are

much more difficult to identify because they can also be explained as internal developments within Hittite itself.

As noted above, in the second millennium Akkadian also interacted with Semitic languages, i.e., from its own language family, a linguistic situation with peculiar issues (Epps, Huehnergard and Pat-El 2013). They were Northwest Semitic languages, and so from a branch different from Akkadian (East Semitic) within the general family of Semitic languages. The earliest known contact was in the first half of the second millennium with Amorite, usually treated as a separate language and classified as the very earliest member of the Northwest Semitic branch (Streck 2000, 2011c). Today, this language has been almost entirely deduced from some 11,600 proper names that appear in Akkadian and Sumerian cuneiform texts, especially from Mari (see above), most of them personal names (e.g. *Ya-ás-ma-aḫ-*^{d}im "(the god) Haddu has listened"). However, the linguistic classification of Amorite, and even its very status as an independent linguistic system, continue to be the subject of debate (Buccellati 1997; Durand 2012; Streck 2013; Sanmartín 2014; Charpin 2016; Andrason and Vita 2018).

In the second half of the second millennium, Akkadian also came into contact with Emarite, Canaanite and Ugaritic, three other Northwest Semitic languages (Vita 2015b). The first two are only partially documented. No complete texts in these languages are preserved, but only linguistic elements interspersed, in varying degrees, in the Akkadian language used by local scribes. Ugaritic is a remarkable exception, particularly due to the large number of texts in this language written in a cuneiform alphabetic script. As for Canaanite, the interaction between Akkadian and a group of Northwest Semitic dialects spoken in Palestine was particularly intense and gave way to what is known as "Canaano-Akkadian" (Rainey 1996; Tropper and Vita 2010; Izre'el 2005, 2012; Baranowski 2016), most evident in the so-called "El-Amarna Letters" (fourteenth century BCE; Rainey 2015). Canaano-Akkadian seems to set the limit reached by linguistic contact between Semitic languages in the second millennium and presents one of the most intense and complex situations of a mixed language in the Ancient Near East (Vita 2015b, 388–394; Andrason and Vita 2014, 2016, 316–324). Northwest Semitic languages or local dialects appear in three main forms in this hybrid language. Canaanite lexemes may appear in the middle of a sentence either independently or acting as glosses, translating a preceding word or phrase (e.g. *ù* sag.du-*nu* : ru-šu-nu *i-na qa-te-ka* "and *our head* is in your hand"). More frequently, the local language is apparent through forms which hybridise Canaanite and Akkadian elements, particularly common in the verbal system (e.g. *a-na mi-ni*$_{7}$ yi-iš-tap-ru ^{i}*ri-ib-*^{d}iškur *ki-na-an-na-ma ṭup-pa a-na* é.gal "Why does Rib-Haddi *continually send* a tablet in this manner to the palace?"), and terms in the local language can also be found in lexical texts (see above the example from Aphek). In the cases of Canaanite, Emarite and Ugaritic, and as in other examples mentioned above, contact between Akkadian and the aforementioned Northwest Semitic languages occurred within communities of scribes, that is, within small communities of (in principle) highly specialized professionals. The prestige of Akkadian amongst these communities of scribes also meant that scribes in Syria-Palestine in the second half of the second millennium did not seem to envisage the use of the Mesopotamian logo-syllabic script for writing local Northwest Semitic languages. In the Ancient Near East of the second millennium, this fact may concern only this type of languages and does not affect non-Semitic languages such as Hurrian

or Hittite. At least in the cases of Ugarit and Canaan, scribes demonstrated that this way was feasible though it was not exploited due to a series of inhibiting elements (Vita 2015b, 395–396).

The historical events that resulted in the destruction of kingdoms such as Ugarit, Emar and Ḫattuša in the 12th cent. BCE also meant that Mesopotamian cuneiform writing was no longer valued in the western periphery and the end of Akkadian as a *lingua franca* on such a large scale as in the preceding centuries. In the following centuries, Mesopotamian cuneiform writing and Akkadian continued to be essential tools for communication in the Ancient Near East, but they shared the stage with scripts such as the linear alphabets and languages such as Aramaic.

NOTES

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CHAPTER TWENTY

Aramaic as *Lingua Franca*

Margaretha Folmer

General Introduction

This chapter discusses various linguistic aspects of the rise and use of Aramaic as the *lingua franca* of three successive Near Eastern empires – the Neo-Assyrian, the Neo-Babylonian, and the Achaemenid (also "Persian") empires. It also considers the survival and gradual decline of Aramaic as a language of communication in the post-Achaemenid Hellenistic world, which promoted (*koine*) Greek as its language of communication.

A *lingua franca* is usually defined as a language used as a language of wider communication between people with different native tongues. For most of its users, a *lingua franca* amounts to a second language, though some of its speakers may have learned (a variety of) that language as their first language (Thomason 2011, 269).

Aramaic was used as a *lingua franca* in three successive Near Eastern empires from the first millennium BCE: the Neo-Assyrian Empire, the Neo-Babylonian Empire and the Achaemenid Empire. In striving to extend their territories, the administrations of these empires incorporated regions with other spoken and written native languages, which were often unrelated linguistically to the native languages of the conquerors (Neo-Assyrian, Late Babylonian and Old Persian). The resulting empires were of immense dimensions and comprised both multi-ethnic and multi-lingual populations. Aramaic – the language of the conquered Arameans – was adopted as a useful medium for the communicative and administrative needs of these empires, and proved vital to their unification.

From the start of its adoption (eighth century), Aramaic manifested not just in official domains such as the central (state) administration and in (international) communication, but also on a more local level, in the administration of private businesses and the like. It developed to assume a wide role in a range of official and private domains in the Achaemenid

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period. After the fall of the Achaemenid Empire (330 BCE), Greek – the new administrative language – rapidly spread over the ancient world and quickly became the new *lingua franca* (*koine*). Aramaic, however – deeply rooted as it was in Near Eastern society – developed into several local languages centered around religious or trade hubs (such as Qumran Aramaic, Nabatean Aramaic and Palmyrene Aramaic), all under the clear influence of Official Aramaic, the administrative language of the Achaemenid Empire.

Aramaic was not the only Semitic language used in the ancient Near East as a *lingua franca*. Akkadian (see chap. 19) served in the Late Bronze Age as a vehicle of communication between the empires of that period (in addition to its use by local administrations).

Neo-Assyrian Empire

Historical Background and the Adoption of Aramaic as Lingua Franca

There are several factors that may have led to Aramaic's status as an everyday medium of written and oral communication in the Neo-Assyrian Empire. One of these factors was probably the simplicity of the Aramaic alphabet. With only twenty-two signs, it was considerably simpler than the complex Akkadian syllabic writing system (mastery of which required a long period of scribal training). This simplicity may also have been instrumental in the rapid spread of Aramaic across the Neo-Assyrian Empire. Regardless, it was undoubtedly a specific set of historical circumstances that allowed the Aramaic alphabet and language – rather than another West Semitic alphabet system – to achieve its everyday status. The Neo-Assyrian Empire began to expand in the ninth century and its rulers reclaimed territories in northern Mesopotamia ("northeast Syria" in what follows) from the middle of this century onward. These territories in the Middle Assyrian period had belonged to Assyria (Kuhrt 1997, 473). Among these (re)conquered territories were Aramean city states located east of the Euphrates on the road from Assyria to the Mediterranean (Sader 2014, 27–30). This area along the banks of the Ḫabur and the upper and middle Euphrates in northeast Syria was infiltrated by Aramaic speaking groups from the eleventh century onward (Fales 2007b, 141; Kuhrt 1997, 398).[1] The city–state of Bit-Baḫiani and its capitals Tell Ḥalaf (ancient Guzana) and Tell Fekheriye (ancient Sikani), as well as the city–state of Bit-Adini and its capital Tell Aḥmar (ancient Til Barsip), were the first Aramean city–states to be incorporated into the empire.

The contact and confrontation with the Arameans that ensued from the conquest of their city–states marks the beginning of the process of Aramaic infiltration into Neo-Assyrian society. Those Aramean city–states west of the Euphrates (in the Trans-Euphrates region) lost their independence in the second part of the eighth century when they were conquered by Tiglathpileser III (744–727) and incorporated as new provinces into the Neo-Assyrian Empire (Sader 2014, 31–36). The Assyrian policy of mass deportation of conquered populations and the resettlement of conquered territories intensified from the reign of Tiglathpileser III onward and brought about a complete reshuffle of the linguistic and ethnic composition of the empire.

It is generally assumed that Aramaic was instrumental in unifying a vast empire confronted with the explosive growth of its ethnically and linguistically diverse population.

There is no direct documentation of this process, however, and it is possible that Assyria's rulers were simply pragmatic in giving their consent to Aramaic's spontaneous but steady rise as a useful medium of communication and administration between native Assyrians and the conquered peoples in the West (Fales 2010, 189), many of whom were speakers of a Northwest Semitic language.[2] This view, however, runs contrary to the general idea of a *lingua franca* as a product of conscious selection by the ruling class and/or the cultural elite.[3] And it is indeed difficult to imagine that Aramaic could have succeeded as it did without the explicit sanction of Assyria's rulers.

The Assyrian state administration embraced not just the Aramaic language, but the Aramaic script and system of writing, including the tradition of writing on leather or papyrus with pen and ink (cf. the Akkadian terms *niāru* "papyrus", *kirku* "roll", *magallatu* "parchment"; Fales 2007b, 97). Aramaic writing styles, on the other hand, such as legal and epistolary styles, were not adopted (Fales 2010, 193, 199). It is unknown to what extent other aspects of the Aramean administrative system were adopted by the Assyrian conquerors, but it is more than likely that this system had an impact in other regards. Writing on perishable materials, for instance, and the manner of sealing such materials, must have had an impact on the filing system as well.

Aramaic began to be used in the state administration of the Neo-Assyrian Empire from the reign of Shalmaneser III (858–824) onward. From the eighth century onward, there is clear evidence that the state administration in the Assyrian heartland was increasingly bilingual. Important witnesses to this linguistic situation are a number of Assyrian reliefs in royal palaces from the time of Tiglathpileser III (744–727) to Assurbanipal (668–631). A recurring scene in these reliefs depicts the scribal registration of both prisoners of war and other war booty; it shows the alphabet scribe as following the lead of the syllabic scribe, or as positioned in the background. Either way, the relief is a visual representation of the relative status of the two scribes and their languages.[4] Neo-Assyrian documents refer to Assyrian scribes as (LÚ.)DUB.SAR (*ṭupšarru*) or (LÚ.)A.BA and to Aramean scribes as (LÚ.)A.BA *aramāya* (*ṭupšarru aramāyu*) (Radner 1997, 82–83; Fales 2007b, 142). Both types of scribes appear as witnesses in Neo-Assyrian legal documents.[5]

Specific Problems

Any effort to describe the interaction between Aramaic and Akkadian (both Neo-Assyrian and Late Babylonian) faces several problems. In the first place, there is the problem of the uneven distribution of Akkadian and Aramaic sources. This problem results primarily from the choice of writing material used for the writing of Aramaic. Whereas Akkadian was written on durable materials (clay tablets, stone, metals), a considerable part of Aramaic was probably written on perishable materials, such as leather (parchment) or papyrus, neither of which had a chance of surviving the Mesopotamian climate. Leather and papyrus were not all that disappeared either; the ink used for the writing of Aramaic on clay tablets and potsherds may also have been washed away through contact with water. In addition, an unknown amount of ink traces on potsherds and clay tablets may have gone unnoticed by archaeologists who were primarily looking for clay tablets with cuneiform writing and who were often unaware of the possibility of Aramaic epigraphs written in ink on such tablets and ostraca. Second, while proper names (personal names and place names) often provide valuable information on the distribution and use of Akkadian and Aramaic, the use of this

evidence is not unproblematic; there is not necessarily a direct connection between the language reflected in a given name and the vernacular of its bearer. For example, Arameans (and other Northwest Semitic peoples) may have adopted Assyrian or Babylonian names for various reasons, but this does not necessarily imply that their vernacular language was Assyrian or Babylonian. The motivations behind name giving and name adoption are complex and connected with tradition, religious and/or ethnic identity, and adaptation to the dominant culture, etc. Third, the documentation of evidence in archaeology's earlier days does not usually meet today's standards; invaluable information directly concerning the *in situ* situation of evidence was often destroyed.

Neo-Assyrian and Aramaic

In order to understand the interaction between Aramaic and Neo-Assyrian, it is important to understand the role of Assyrian in this period. Assyrian was and remained the socially, politically, and culturally dominant language. It was the ultimate vehicle for the propagation of Assyrian royal ideology and Assyrian cultural identity, and royal inscriptions and literary texts were written in the Babylonian variety of Akkadian. But though Assyrian remained an administrative language until the end of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, scholars more or less agree that Aramaic was increasingly important in the administrative arena during the last decades of the Neo-Assyrian Empire; to what extent, however, is disputed. The problem here is how to weigh the decrease of Assyrian administrative texts in the so-called "State Archives" from the capital cities in the seventh century, and the relative increase of Aramaic in archives from the same period in northeast Syria. The uneven spread of Akkadian and Aramaic evidence makes a full appreciation of the interaction between the two languages extremely difficult. It is safest to conclude that Aramaic held – more than anywhere else in the empire – a dominant position as an administrative language in northeast Syria, a region characterized since time immemorial by a strong Aramean presence and where Aramaic was the prime vernacular language (see above). It is questionable to what extent conclusions on the role of Aramaic in this region of the empire can be extrapolated to the Assyrian heartland in the final decades of the seventh century. At any rate, it is important to stress that – as far as *written* language is concerned – while Aramaic functioned as the language of communication and administration under the Neo-Assyrian Empire (see also Beaulieu 2006, 208), when it came to other functions of written language (*belles lettres*, the writing of royal inscriptions, etc.), Standard Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian preserved their dominant position (Beaulieu 2006, 191; Röllig 2000, 185).[6]

Aramaic Sources from the Neo-Assyrian Empire

Some 500 Aramaic inscriptions (most of which have now been published) are known from the Neo-Assyrian Empire.[7] Almost all of these are written on clay (tablets, tags, or seal impressions; tags and seal impressions are often referred to with the word bulla, "clay lump"). In addition, there are writings on pottery (ostraca, fragments of pottery), stone and different metals (for a recent overview, see Fales et al. 2005). Apart from these direct sources, there are several indirect sources which attest to the use of Aramaic within the empire. These include depictions of Aramean scribes on Assyrian reliefs, references in

Assyrian texts to Aramaic scribes and documents, examples of Aramaic influence on Assyrian (in particular loanwords; see Abraham and Sokoloff 2011), the presence of Aramaic names in Assyrian texts, and the use of alphabetic marks on objects for the purpose of identification and registration.

Aramaic as a Spoken Language: International Language of Diplomacy and Vernacular Language

There is a consensus that Aramaic was one of the two important spoken languages of the Neo-Assyrian Empire (Parpola 2004,12; Fales 2010,189), but the evidence for this is perforce indirect. The ultimate source for Aramaic as an international language of diplomacy is the well-known biblical passage in II Kgs 18: 27–37 and its duplicate in Isa 36: 12–20. To what extent this biblical source can be taken as a reliable witness is of course disputable but, if we do so, it might demonstrate that by 701 BCE Aramaic was used as an international language of communication and diplomacy. In the biblical passage, three high officials of the Judean king Hezekiah ask the *rab šaqeh* "chief butler" (an important but nevertheless anonymous personal attendant of King Sennacherib) to communicate with them in Aramaic in order to prevent their exchange from being understood by the people sitting on the wall.[8] This is because, at least in Judah, knowledge of Aramaic would have been limited to the upper class. It is unknown how this variety of spoken Aramaic related to other Aramaic vernaculars of that time.

Evidence for Aramaic as a vernacular language in the Assyrian Empire stems from several sources. Strong support comes from the military center Dūr-Katlimmu on the east bank of the Ḫabur river, an Assyrian provincial center already by the Middle Assyrian period. Dūr-Katlimmu has yielded among others tablets in Neo-Assyrian datable to the last decades of the Neo-Assyrian Empire and the beginning of the Neo-Babylonian Empire.[9] On the basis of an awkward use of the Akkadian stative in these legal documents, Radner has shown that Assyrian was not the mother tongue of the writers of these tablets.[10] Along with the high frequency of Aramaic epigraphs on these tablets (approximately one third) and the number of Aramaic monolingual triangular tablets in Dūr-Katlimmu, this has led Radner to conclude that Aramaic was the principal vernacular of the writers of these Neo-Assyrian tablets. The same is probably true for other places in this region, all of which have disclosed a relatively high proportion of Aramaic epigraphs.

A similar stance is taken by Parpola who has argued on the basis of onomastics that the population of the Neo-Assyrian heartland – including the ruling class and the royal family – were fully bilingual by the beginning of the seventh century (a process which, according to Parpola, had begun in the late eighth century). He bases his argument primarily on the increase of West Semitic names among important state officials and the occurrence of Hebrew and Aramaic names among several queens of Neo-Assyrian kings (Parpola 2004, 12[11]). The onomastic evidence itself does not prove absolutely that Aramaic was the main spoken language at the time – let alone that the upper class was bilingual – but the accumulation of evidence gives credibility to the assumption that Aramaic was at least one of the more important vernaculars in certain circles of seventh century Neo-Assyrian society. In fact, more than one Aramaic vernacular may have been current at the time. The onomastic evidence does not allow for further conclusions.

Aramaic in State and Other Official Correspondence

Among the ca. 2000 official letters sent by and to the crown from this period, not a single letter in Aramaic survives (see Radner 2014, 8). Only letters in Assyrian are extant. On the other hand, there are references to (the writing of) letters in Aramaic in the official state correspondence of this period. This indirect evidence is the only evidence there is for a state correspondence conducted in Aramaic. There is, for example, the reaction of King Sargon II (721–705) to a letter addressed to him by the Babylonian correspondent Sin-iddina (governor and resident of the city of Ur in Babylonia). Sargon fiercely disapproves of Sin-iddina's proposal to continue their correspondence in Aramaic: "Why would you not write and send me messages in Babylonian? Really, the message which you write in it must be drawn up in this very manner – this a fixed regulation!" (SAA 17 2:15–22) (translation quoted from Radner 2014, 84). This reaction is explained by Radner as an effort to strengthen the Babylonian language and writing system, rather than as a rejection of the use of Aramaic as an epistolary language in the royal correspondence (Radner 2014, 84).

A further example is a late ninth century or early eighth century Assyrian letter in the royal correspondence which explicitly refers to a letter in Aramaic (*egirtu armetu*) that was handed over to the king.[12] Even though nothing is known about the place of origin and purpose of this Aramaic letter, the reference to it is important because it demonstrates that, already at this time, a king could be addressed in Aramaic.

Only one letter in Aramaic from the Neo-Assyrian Empire has survived: the so-called Assur ostracon (from the end of the Neo-Assyrian Empire). The letter – written in ink on a large potsherd preserved in fragments – unfortunately defies complete interpretation. Its correspondents are two high officials with Assyrian names, Bel-eṭir and Pir'-Amur(ru). The first is known from cuneiform sources as a military commander in service of King Assurbanipal, and a date in the middle of the seventh century for the ostracon is thus secure (Fales 2010, 198). It is disputed whether this letter represents an official or a private communication. On the one hand, the ostracon may demonstrate that it was not unusual for Assyrian officials to conduct their correspondence in Aramaic (rather than in Assyrian), at least when state affairs (political and military) were concerned (Radner 2014, 85). On the other hand, the sender of the letter may have written his letter in Aramaic because it was the vernacular of the time. Fales raises this latter possibility and interprets the ostracon as an example of a private letter. According to Fales, the sender chose to sort out his private problems in the vernacular (Aramaic) and not in the official language of the empire (Assyrian), which was the "language of work" (Fales 2010, 200). This is based on the (silent, but controvertible) assumption that private letters are often written in the vernacular (on Aramaic as a vernacular language see above).

The place from which the letter was sent (either Assur or Babylon) is also disputed. As it was found in Assur, many scholars are of the opinion that the text was written in Babylon. Fales, on the other hand, has raised the possibility that the Aramaic text is a draft and that the final text was written on perishable material and sent from Assur to Babylon. Fales' reconstruction thus entertains the notion that Assur was the possible residence of Bel-eṭir, the sender of the letter. But whether a draft or the final text, the question remains: why has only one such letter ostracon has survived?[13] According to Radner, the almost complete loss of textual material on potsherds in Assyria is to be explained by the failure of

earlier archaeologists to recognize ostraca inscribed with ink; due to the solubility of ink in water, these texts were lost (Radner 2014, 85–86).[14] Another possible explanation is that drafts were usually disposed of after a relatively short period of preservation.

Aramaic in the State Administration

Even though a good deal of evidence for the administrative use of Aramaic comes from northeast Syria and is not directly linked to the central state administration, there is sufficient evidence from the capital cities in the Assyrian heartland that links the use of Aramaic to the central state administration.

Sixteen bronze weights in the form of a lion with Assyrian and Aramaic inscriptions from the royal palace in Kalḫu (modern Nimrud) bear clear witness to the administrative use of Aramaic from the middle of the eighth century onward. These official weights are provided with the names of the four Assyrian kings who reigned from the middle of the eighth century until the beginning of the seventh century (Tiglathpileser III, Shalmaneser V, Sargon II, Sennacherib).[15] A clay label (tag) from the same place bears the Aramaic inscription *lhykl'* "for the palace" (ND 2346), while another has the inscription *lbyt[* ' "for the house/temple" (ND 2347). Other labels from Kalḫu with Aramaic inscriptions bear a royal stamp seal impression. Examples like these show witness clearly to the use of Aramaic in the palace administration.

Aramaic in the Legal Administration: Heartland Versus Northeast Syria

Among the approximately 6000 administrative clay tablets written in Assyrian cuneiform from this period,[16] some 2000 pertain to the legal domain. These legal documents are known from both private archives and royal archives (palaces and administrative buildings, in particular the palace mound in Nineveh). They are mostly conveyances – which record a transfer of ownership (proofs of ownership) – and obligations (debts of different sorts).[17] All of these were sealed and witnessed for validation.

Important legal documents (for the sale of houses, plots of land, and slaves, including the adoption of slaves) were most commonly given a rectangular form in the Neo-Assyrian period.[18] In the heartland, these conveyances were usually written in Neo-Assyrian, but a possible Aramaic example from Nineveh exists as well (Fales 1986, no. 11).

Aramaic epigraphs are regularly found on these tablets. Epigraphs are short notes or abstracts of Neo-Assyrian (and later, Late Babylonian) deeds (often referred to as "endorsements", sometimes as a "labels").[19] They were written secondarily in empty spaces on tablets. There is no absolute consensus as to their function. They may have had a purely administrative purpose, to facilitate easier identification of the tablets' contents, for example (possibly but not necessarily intended for persons who did not read Neo-Assyrian) (Radner 2002, 22). Alternatively, they may have had a legal function (Fales 2000, 118 "further ratification of the legitimacy of a deed"). The epigraphs are characterized by two self-designatory terms: *dnt* and, more rarely, *'grt*. Both terms are Akkadian loanwords, and both refer to "legal documents" in this context. Most of the tablets with Aramaic

epigraphs were found in private business archives, but some thirty examples were found in the royal citadel of Nineveh (Fales 2000, 92) and, as such, are connected to the state administration.

The triangular form of tablet was used primarily for obligations (predominantly loans of silver or barley). Triangle-shaped tablets are often pierced with holes and some of them bear the imprints of rope. Most of these triangular tablets were thus not independent documents (Röllig 2000, 185; Röllig 2014, 6[20]) – the holes were probably used for the attachment of a rope in order to connect the tablets to another object, possibly a document written on leather or papyrus (Radner 1997, 27). The tablets were preserved as long as the debt was outstanding. After payment, they were probably destroyed, no longer being of importance (Radner 2011, 397).

In the heartland, these tablets were usually written in Assyrian cuneiform, but occasionally in Aramaic as well. Most of the Aramaic examples from the heartland (7) were found in private business archives in Assur (Fales 2000, 97–101), but several examples from the royal citadel in Nineveh demonstrate that the use of Aramaic in the administration of obligations was solidly anchored within the state administration as well (Fales 1986, nos. 9, 13).

Two additional triangle-shaped tablets from Nineveh – likewise linked to the royal palace – are written in Assyrian and Aramaic (one language on either side of the tablet). These are without parallel (Fales 1986, nos. 3, 6). They are important because they demonstrate the equal status of Assyrian and Aramaic in legal matters.

In northeast Syria, a region which was retaken by the Assyrians from the Arameans in the ninth century, Aramaic was in all likelihood a vernacular language. Several Neo-Assyrian archives from this region have been recovered which contain a conspicuous number of monolingual tablets written in Aramaic. These are both triangle- and rectangular-shaped, and were predominantly used for obligations and conveyances. These triangle-shaped tablets often begin with the self-designation *ḫtm* "sealed (document)". In comparison with the Assyrian heartland, the number of Aramaic monolingual tablets in archives from this region is significantly higher. This textual evidence has been crucial to a modified view of the status of Aramaic during the last decades of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, a view which sees Aramaic as an important vernacular in the final phase of the empire.

Tablets with Aramaic inscriptions from this region are known from Tell Ḥalaf (ancient Guzana, in the upper Ḫabur region; the Ḫabur river is the most important tributary of the Euphrates in Syria), Tell Aḥmar (ancient Til Barsip, on the east bank of the Ḫabur), Tell Shiukh Fawqani (ancient Burmarina, on the east bank of the Euphrates), Ma'allanāte (a Syrian region, uncertain identification) and Tell Šēḫ Ḥamad (ancient Dūr-Katlimmu, on the east bank of the lower Ḫabur).[21] These tablets are all datable to the seventh century. With the exception of those from Tell Ḥalaf, almost all of these texts were published in the last three decades.

In contrast to the heartland, triangle-shaped obligations from northeast Syria were predominantly written in Aramaic, as the combined evidence from several sites in the region demonstrates (Radner 2011, 398). The evidence from Dūr-Katlimmu in particular is overwhelming (Röllig 2014). In addition, a large number of conveyances from Dūr-Katlimmu bear an Aramaic epigraph (Radner 2001, 398). Rectangular conveyance tablets

written wholly in Aramaic also occur in this region (see Lemaire 2001; Bachelot and Fales 2005; Lipiński 2010; Röllig 2014 [no. 1** adoption of a slave]). It is clear that Aramaic was thus a full-fledged alternative to Neo-Assyrian for writing conveyances in this region in the seventh century.

Neo-Babylonian Period (626–539 BCE)

Considerably less attention has been paid to Aramaic sources from the Neo-Babylonian period than the Neo-Assyrian period. This is principally because the amount of Neo-Babylonian evidence for the use of Aramaic is more limited and less diverse than the earlier evidence. A recent interest in the socio-economic history of Babylonia, however, coupled with the recent publication of part of the Āl Yāhūdu (Town of Judah) archive from Babylonia (Pearce and Wunsch 2014), has given a fresh boost to the study of Aramaic epigraphs on clay tablets from the Neo-Babylonian period.[22]

Historical Background

After the conquest of Babylonia by the Assyrians at the close of the eighth century, Babylonia remained under Neo-Assyrian rule for most of the following century. In 626, however, Nabopolossar, the founder of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, ascended to the throne (see Kuhrt 1997, 589–622 for a general outline) and succeeded in securing Babylonia against Assyrian incursions. From 616 onward, he further began to attack Assyrian territories. After several years, Nabopolossar succeeded in destroying several important Assyrian cities. This led to the overthrow of the Neo-Assyrian Empire (the fall of Nineveh in 612). Nabopolossar thus became the inheritor of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. His son Nebuchadnezzar II (604–562) is well-known for his multiple campaigns to – among other places – the Levant, as well as his conquests there and the ensuing deportations of Levantine and other peoples to Babylonia. These conquests further diversified the highly mixed population of an empire already diversified in the Neo-Assyrian period, when Chaldeans and Arameans both settled and were settled by force in Babylonia.

With King Cyrus' conquest of Babylon in 539, the Neo-Babylonian empire came to an end and the province of Babylonia and Ebirnari "Across-the-River" came into being. Documentation in Babylonian Akkadian, however, did not cease (Jursa 2005, 2). Texts demonstrate that traditional institutions such as the temples continued to operate in the Achaemenid period as in the Neo-Babylonian period. Overall, it seems that this transition was marked by continuity. There exists an enormous amount of administrative documentation from this period. The evidence peaks during the long reign of Nebuchadnezzar II (604–562) and dwindles only after the reign of the Achaemenid king Darius I (522–486), during the Babylonian revolts in the early years of his son Xerxes (486–465) (see Kuhrt 1997, 603; Jursa 2005, 54). Because of the unity of the pre-Xerxes period, scholars prefer to speak today of the long sixth century (620–484) (Jursa 2014b, 5). Several archives witness to the transition from the Neo-Babylonian to the Achaemenid Empire (for instance, the Āl-Yāhūdu and Neirab tablets).

Aramean Presence in Babylonia

Babylonia's multi-ethnic society was characterized by a strong dichotomy between its urban and rural populations. The Babylonian elite lived in an urban environment, whereas tribal population groups (Arameans and Chaldeans) lived in rural regions. This strong tribal presence had existed in Babylonia from the ninth century (Kuhrt 1997, 399). Chaldeans settled mainly in Sealand in the south of Babylonia – east of the Euphrates – while Arameans settled primarily in proximity to urban centers in central and northern Babylonia, as well as in the Tigris region (Jursa 2014a, 97). The strong presence of these tribal groups is reflected by the fact that, in the eighth and seventh centuries, many Babylonian kings were of Chaldean or Aramean origin. Several kings in the Neo-Babylonian period were also of Chaldean or Aramean lineage and not of urban Babylonian origin.[23] The possible Aramean background of some Neo-Babylonian rulers is of importance to an assessment of the influence of Aramaic in this period.

Specific Problems

Any judgment on the role of Aramaic in the Neo-Babylonian Empire and Aramaic's interaction with Late Babylonian[24] is not only hampered by the problems indicated above but also by the geographical and social distribution of Late Babylonian sources.

Babylonian remained the literary language of Babylonia throughout the Neo-Babylonian period. This is evident from the many surviving literary compositions of this period. Late Babylonian was also the principal administrative language of the empire, but the uneven distribution of the textual evidence complicates any balanced interpretation. The main sources for Late Babylonian as an administrative language are the archives of the Shamash temple in Nippur (Ebabbar archive) and the Eanna temple in Uruk. The Neo-Babylonian state administration, on the other hand, is almost absent from the evidence available to us (Kuhrt 1997, 603), including the state correspondence from Neo-Babylonian palaces. This is in complete contrast to the Neo-Assyrian period, from which an impressive amount of royal letters have survived (in the State Archives; see the section on Aramaic in state and other official correspondence.

The primary sources for the use of Aramaic in the Neo-Babylonian period are approximately 280 tablets in Late Babylonian bearing brief Aramaic "epigraphs" added secondarily to the Babylonian text (just like their counterparts on Neo-Assyrian tablets) (Sonnevelt 2016, 9 and Sonnevelt, forthcoming).[25] These Aramaic epigraphs were found in private business and temple archives.

Another sizeable corpus is formed by several hundred bricks from sixth century Babylon with stamped seal impressions in Aramaic and Late Babylonian (Sass and Marzahn 2010). The Late Babylonian impressions are royal inscriptions and bear a royal name (those of Nebuchadnezzar, Neriglissar or Nabonidus). The Aramaic impressions do not bear personal names and do not occur on bricks before the sixth century. They do not seem to have had an administrative function, but serve to underline the importance of Aramaic within the highest echelons of society.

The relative scarcity of primary Babylonian and Aramaic sources forces scholars to resort, more than for the earlier period, to indirect sources such as proper names and references to (Aramaic) documents.

A further problem is the Assyriologist's habit of bringing together under the label of "Late Babylonian" tablets not just from the Neo-Babylonian period, but from the Achaemenid and later periods as well. While this may be useful for Assyriologists, it is less convenient for those who study the Aramaic language and are interested in its development.

Aramaic as an International Language of Diplomacy

The letter from the Canaanite king of Ekron, Adon, to the Pharaoh of Egypt (end seventh century) (TAD A1.1) is the only letter in Aramaic from this period which has survived. This letter, written on papyrus, is a request for help against an (imminent) attack by the king of Babylon. The letter demonstrates that Aramaic was a language of diplomacy in this period, used by kings with different native languages.[26]

The letter can also be seen as an indirect piece of evidence for the similar use of Aramaic by the Neo-Babylonian kings. And Aramaic may indeed have been of prime importance in the Neo-Babylonian state correspondence. The absence of royal letters written in Late Babylonian might indicate that royal letters were, at least in part, written not in Late Babylonian but in Aramaic. In the light of the Chaldean or Aramean origin of several Neo-Babylonian kings, this is not unlikely (Jursa 2014a, 96–97, 101; see above and n. 23). As the Aramaic documents themselves have not survived, this can only be inferred from such indirect sources as references to such letters in the temple archives.[27] There are also references to royal letters in Late Babylonian texts, but the language in which they were written is not specified and thus remains unknown (Jursa 2014a, 102).

Aramaic in the Legal Administration

Aramaic probably played an important role in other domains of the state administration but, in view of the absence of documentation from such administrations, this can only be inferred indirectly. Aramaic manifests itself primarily in archives in this period (for an overview, see Jursa 2005) – both in private business archives and, to a lesser degree, in temple archives – with tablets surviving from Babylon (Kasr and Egidi business archives), Nippur (Murašû business archive), Sippar (Ebabbar temple archive), Uruk (Eanna temple archive), Borsippa, Ur, Larsa, and several other places.

Both in private business archives and in temple archives there are indications that Aramaic was of importance in the state administration. Temple archives frequently mention the *sēpiru*, the (Aramaic) alphabet scribe (Pearce 2000), who was in most cases in service to the king or a royal institution and connected thereby to the royal administration. The *sēpiru* is often mentioned in connection with the payment of taxes (tax collector) (Jursa 2012, 381–93) and Aramaic epigraphs are sometimes found in connection with the payment of yearly taxes in private business archives (see Sonnevelt 2016, 15 on the Murašû business archive from Nippur, second half fifth century). The presence of the *sēpiru* increases in documentation from the reign of Nabonidus (555–539) onward, an indication that Aramaic was more and more important in the official administration of this period (Jursa 2012, 390–393).

Aramaic epigraphs are relatively rare in archives from the long sixth century, but they become more frequent in the second part of the fifth century, e.g. in the Murašû archive

(Baker 2003, 245), where more than half of the documents in certain dossiers bear epigraphs (Sonnevelt, in print; Stolper 1985).[28] In the temple archives – traditional and conservative institutions – Aramaic epigraphs are rare and limited to cases in which there is a clear link with the outer world of trade (Sonnevelt 2016, 14; with examples from the temple in Sippar).

A considerable number of Aramaic epigraphs are found in a specific type of obligation: so-called promissory notes. The names in these epigraphs usually, though not exclusively, refer to the obligated party (the debtor) of the recorded transaction. Although the epigraphs are very brief, there is considerable variation in their phrasing and in the number of elements from the transaction that they render (debtor, commodity, quantity, date). Fairly often they contain the self-designatory term *štr* "document". They often seem to be written for administrative use by the creditor, but the situation is admittedly complicated (Sonnevelt 2016, 11–13) and there is no absolute consensus on the function of these epigraphs (Fales 2000, 117–118).

The most important private business archives that feature Aramaic epigraphs are the Neirab archive (Neirab, Syria), the Āl-Yāhūdu archive (unprovenanced), the Murašû archive (Nippur), and the Kasr archive (Babylon) (Zadok 2003; Oelsner 2006). The onomastics of these private business archives are of particular interest as they are tangible proof that the Babylonian exile brought several groups of speakers of a Northwest Semitic language to Babylonia.

The small archive found in Neirab in Syria (near Aleppo) contains 27 tablets in Late Babylonian dating from the reign of Nerigilissar (560–556) up to and including the reign of the Achaemenid king Darius I (521–486). Five have an Aramaic epigraph. It is commonly held that the texts were written in south Babylonia by deportees from Syria. The texts concern the business of the sons of a certain Nusku-gabbe, who presumably belonged to the first generation of deportees (Tolini 2014, with references to older literature). The archive was possibly brought to the hometown of the deportees in Syria by a grandson of Nusku-gabbe after the exile. Most of the tablets from this archive (20/27) are obligations (promissory notes). The other seven documents are conveyances, one of which bears an Aramaic epigraph. Four of the obligations bear an Aramaic epigraph; this is a relatively high number (20%). One of the obligations (no. 7) records a debt of silver which one of the sons of Nusku-gabbe owes to his brother. The Aramaic epigraph (with the name of the debtor in Aramaic) *might* suggest that the brothers were able to read, and perhaps to write, Aramaic.[29] Only Nusku-gabbe has an Aramaic name. His sons were given, or adopted, Babylonian names, possibly to facilitate their integration into Babylonian society (Tolini 2014, 67). The tablets reveal that the linguistic situation in Babylonia was particularly complex; it is possible that several varieties of Aramaic were spoken there, in all likelihood including a variant originally spoken in Neirab. The tablets also demonstrate that the information that can be derived from personal names is not always straightforward.

Another group of deportees is reflected in the Āl-Yāhūdu ("town of Judah") tablets. The name given to these tablets refers to a place-name which occurs in those tablets that have been published so far, and which reflects the Judean origin of a group of deportees settled in south Babylonia. The 105 documents that have been published

were written between 572–477. Among them there are 10 tablets with Aramaic epigraphs,[30] a relatively high but not necessarily meaningful figure since their archaeological context is totally unknown (they were not found in controlled excavations, and are scattered over several private collections; for critical remarks, see Waerzeggers 2015, 181, 187–188).

Information from personal names, combined with information drawn from the Aramaic epigraphs, can shed light on the use and knowledge of Babylonian and Aramaic in this community of exiles. Most of the Aramaic epigraphs occur in obligations (promissory notes), usually – as elsewhere – with the name of the debtor. There are cases in which both creditor and debtor have a full West Semitic name, and yet no Aramaic epigraph is used.[31] Cases like these, and the one in the Neirab tablet, demand a reconsideration of the administrative function and the intended reader of the Aramaic epigraphs.

Only one monolingual Aramaic conveyance tablet from this period is known. It is datable to year 34 of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar (571/570 BCE; Lemaire 2001, no. 6a) and presumably originates from Syria. The meagre evidence from Babylonia stands in sharp contrast to the wealth of Aramaic monolingual tablets from the last decades of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. This *might* indicate that perishable materials rather than clay tablets were used in northeast Syria in the Neo-Babylonian period for the writing of conveyances in Aramaic. Lemaire (2001, no. 6a) assumes that the aforementioned document is a late example of the rectangular-shaped tablets in Aramaic known from northeast Syria.

Aramaic as a Vernacular Language; Language Replacement

It is generally assumed that Aramaic was an important – if not the most important – vernacular language in Babylonia in the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid periods. A lively piece of supporting evidence for this assumption is the supposed instance of the royal official Nabû-ahu-iddin cursing in Aramaic (Jursa 2012, 380–381). This letter, probably written in the Achaemenid period (during the rule of Cambyses) and addressed to the chief administrator of the Eanna temple in Uruk, dovetails with the assumption that Aramaic gradually usurped Late Babylonian as the principal vernacular language of Babylonia. This assumption is based on a combination of observations about Aramaic influence on Late Babylonian (in particular its syntax), as well as the West Semitic (Aramaic) onomasticon (Zadok 1978; Zadok 2014, 96). It is uncertain when this process of language replacement was completed. Contemporary consensus is that Late Babylonian was probably still a spoken language in the Late Babylonian period and that it was completely replaced by Aramaic at the beginning of the Hellenistic period at the latest (Beaulieu 2006, 206).[32] Thousands of seal impressions on clay (also "bullae") found in Seleucia on the Tigris – and presumably once attached to papyrus or leather documents – provide indirect evidence for the gradual demise of Late Babylonian as an administrative language. This is all the more compelling in light of the almost complete absence of clay tablets in Late Babylonian from this city (Invernizzi 2003). The latest administrative texts in Late Babylonian known today are from the early first century BCE (Raḫimesu archive from Babylon; Arsacid period) (Jursa 2005, 75).

Achaemenid Empire (ca. 550–330 BCE)

Historical Background

The Achaemenids (named after Achaemenes, the founder of the dynasty) came to power in the middle of the sixth century BCE. The Achaemenid Empire was expanded by Cyrus the Great (559–530). Among his conquests, the capture of Babylon in 539 is one of the most important, as it marks the end of the Neo-Babylonian Empire and heralds the extensive period of Achaemenid rule over the ancient Near East. This lasted until the conquest of Alexander the Great in 330. In 525, the empire's territory was further expanded by Cambyses' (530–522) conquest of Egypt. The empire's final contours were established under his successor, Darius I (522–486), who boasts of his victories in the Bisitun inscription (520), written in Elamite, Old Persian and Babylonian Akkadian (on the Aramaic version, see the end of this section).

The Achaemenids were pragmatic in their adoption of several effective aspects of the preceding empire's administrative apparatus, including its use of the Aramaic language and script. Under Achaemenid rule, Aramaic functioned as both an official administrative language and as the empire's official language of communication (*lingua franca*), hence its name: "Official Aramaic" (also: "Imperial Aramaic", "Standard Aramaic"). Aramaic served for communication between the administrative centers of the empire and was thus instrumental in the unification and cohesion of this immense empire. The empire was connected by an extensive road system, while an efficient Achaemenid postal service made fast communication possible (Kuhrt 2014, 122–126). It is generally assumed that the Achaemenid authorities communicated with their subjects in Aramaic and that documents were translated from Aramaic into a local language when necessary. The ultimate showpiece for this procedure is the Demotic correspondence between the satrap Pharandates and the priests of the Khnum temple at Elephantine (beginning fifth century; Kuhrt 2007, ch. 17 no. 30; Briant 2002, 508). The satrapal letter was translated from Aramaic to Demotic, while the priests answered directly in Demotic. But procedures for the use of Aramaic may well have differed from situation to situation. It is widely believed that such translation procedures are reflected in the Biblical Aramaic term *mᵊfāraš* in Ezra 4:18 (see Folmer 2011, 582).

Among the official administrative languages of the empire, Aramaic was the only language to spread from the imperial centers in Persepolis, Susa and Babylon to every corner of the empire; Aramaic reached as far as the western and northern parts of Asia Minor, southern Egypt, the Arabian desert, and northern Afghanistan, as well as further to the east, well into Pakistan (the latter is indirectly attested by the bilingual inscriptions of King Aśoka in Aramaic and Greek from third century BCE Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as Aramaic heterograms in Middle Persian from the 1st century BCE onward). In addition to Aramaic, local (administrative) languages – often former national languages – continued to be used across the empire. Bilingual, trilingual and even quadrilingual inscriptions from Persia and Asia Minor confirm the complex linguistic situation within the empire (Briant 2002, 450–51). The best known example of such a multilingual inscription is Darius' II Bisitun inscription in Old Persian, Babylonian Akkadian and Elamite (520), in which his

victories are recorded. A fifth century copy of this text in Aramaic was found at Elephantine and a Babylonian copy in Babylon.

Specific Problems

Aramaic sources from the Achaemenid period are more numerous and more diverse than those from the previous two periods of administration, but their spread is nevertheless uneven. As in the previous two periods, most Aramaic texts were probably written on perishable materials, in addition to being written on more durable materials, such as stone, metals and pottery. Because of Egypt's favorable climatological circumstances, the concentration of Aramaic texts on papyrus and leather is relatively high there (Elephantine papyri, Arsames letters, Hermopolis letters and many others), whereas Aramaic on perishable materials from other satrapies is relatively rare (Bactria, Ebirnari [Samaria papyri]), though this evidence is occasionally supplemented by indirect evidence for writing in Aramaic on perishable materials (e.g. seal impressions on clay from Daskyleion in Asia Minor).

Origins of Official Achaemenid Aramaic

An important but disputed question is which variety of Aramaic stood at the cradle of Official Aramaic and which in turn became the *lingua franca* of the Achaemenid period. As important pieces of information are lacking, this question cannot be conclusively answered. There is not just the potentially heavy loss of Aramaic textual witnesses (see above), but also the paucity of diagnostic linguistic features in Aramaic texts from the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods. From a historical perspective, it makes sense to look for a direct precursor of Achaemenid Official Aramaic in Babylonia in the Neo-Babylonian period or even earlier. Gzella has revived this suggestion on the basis of the feature of nasalization or degemination through *n* in Achaemenid Official Aramaic, which is often attributed to Babylonian Akkadian (Gzella 2015, 162–63, 171, 209; also Folmer 2012, 134–35),[33] as well as by adducing linguistic evidence from the Assur ostracon, which he believes was written in and sent from Babylonia (Gzella 2015, 142–43).[34] Fales, on the other hand – reflecting on the new Aramaic sources from northeast Syria – has suggested that a precursor of Achaemenid Official Aramaic can be found in seventh century Assyria (Fales 2007b, 141), but this suggestion is not based on linguistic observations.

Standardization Process

One of the characteristics of a standard language is naturally some process of standardization of the language. Standardization may be the result of conscious processes or not (McColl Millar 2013, 415, 419 "engineered standardization" and "circumstantial standardization"). The highly standardized orthography in letters by the central authorities – most conspicuous in the Arsames letters – demonstrates that Aramaic went through a process of engineered standardization, but the details of this process are unknown as documentation is lacking (see following section).

Aramaic in the State Correspondence and Other Official Correspondences

No original letters to and by Achaemenid kings have survived. The Aramaic letters in the biblical Book of Ezra are possibly based on such letters, but they have in their present form undergone a considerable amount of redaction (Ezra 4:11–16; 4:17–22; 5:7–17; 6:6–12; 7:12–26) (Folmer 1995, 754–55).

Epistolary Official Aramaic was used in official correspondences by the Achaemenid authorities. This is evidenced by several satrapal correspondences. The Arsames correspondence and the recently published Akhvamazda correspondence (Naveh and Shaked 2012) are both representative of official letter writing. Such letters were issued by the satrapal chancelleries. The thirteen official letters on leather by and to the satrap of Egypt, Arsames (TAD A6.3–6.16), reflect the official letter-writing style which was standard in the chancelleries of the central authorities near the end of the fifth century (the same applies to the two additional letters on papyrus which were found at Elephantine [TAD A6.1–6.2]). Arsames probably wrote his letters to Egypt during his stay in one of the capitals in the East, either Babylon or Susa.

The eight letters written by Akhvamazda to Bagavant (A1–8), the governor of Khulmi (A2:8; modern Khulm in north Afghanistan), were written more than half a century later than the Arsames letters (A1–4 have dates between 353 and 348).[35] Even though Akhvamazda's function is nowhere indicated in these letters, there is reason to believe that he was satrap of Bactria and Sogdiana at the time and was resident in the capital, Bactra (Naveh and Shaked 2012, 17). The letters demonstrate a clear-cut continuity in the way in which official letters in Aramaic were drafted, both with respect to linguistic and to material aspects. They share with the Arsames letters a highly conservative orthography (e.g. a consistent representation of **n*), a considerable number of stock-phrases (such as *hn ʿl mr'y ṭb… ytʿšt…* "if it pleases my lord …, let him / may he think…"; *mny šym ṭʿm* "an order was issued by me", *kn 'mr* "he says thus"), several conservative linguistic traits (such as the preservation of the short forms of the imperfect, with or without preceding negation *'l*), the address formula (*mn PN ʿl PN*) [however *'l PN* in the external address]; see Folmer 2017). Not only is leather used for the writing of the two collections of letters, there is also a marked uniformity in size, lay-out and folding between the two groups of letters (ibid.). On the other hand, there are also striking differences between the two corpora. The Bactrian letters contain a considerable number of words derived from an Iranian language – possibly Bactrian – and their scribes more than once commit errors in Aramaic, for instance, in attributive phrases with a modifying demonstrative, which require a noun in the emphatic state in Aramaic (*z' 'grt* "this letter" A4,8; *ṭ'm znh* "this order" A6,11). Cases like these clearly betray the non-Semitic background of the scribes. The paleography also differs considerably from the Arsames letters in that the script of the Bactrian letters shows affinities with other fourth century scripts, such as the script of the contemporary Samaria papyri (satrapy of Ebirnari). Put together, the combined evidence from these two collections of satrapal letters demonstrates that there was a strong, centrally propelled, uniform scribal education system in place which lasted until the very end of the Achaemenid period. This system was not purely conservative but was open to innovation, as the development of the script in the Bactrian documents shows. Neither did educational training

prevent the strong influence of the local Bactrian language on Official Aramaic, particularly on its vocabulary.

Aramaic as reflected in the official Arsames correspondence was imitated in letters which issued from the chancelleries of local authorities. A prime example of this is the communal correspondence concerning issues of importance to the Judean community of Elephantine in southern Egypt (Yedaniah archive; TAD A4.1–4.10; last quarter of fifth century), such as the celebration of Passover (TAD A4.1) and the destruction of the local Judean temple (TAD A4.7–4.8). The finalized version of letters TAD A4.7–4.8 were sent to the authorities in Yehud (Palestine) and the drafts (TAD A4.7–4.8) were preserved as copies of outgoing mail in the local chancellery at Elephantine. These two letters are examples of a long-distance, inter-satrapal correspondence. The answer from Palestine was also preserved in the form of a short memo (TAD A4.9). The orthography of these documents is less consistent than that attested in the Arsames letters and – together with other documents from the community – contains pronunciation spellings (TAD A4.7,20 *ʿznh* < *ʿd znh* "until now" [lit. until this], with *d* supralinearly added), which strongly suggests that Aramaic was spoken by members of this Judean community (Folmer 1995, 745). Private letters from Hermopolis (TAD A2.1–7) bear evidence that the same was true for Arameans living in Memphis (TAD A2.2,10 *hlh* < *hn l'* "if not") and, by extension, probably those in Assuan and Ofi (Luxor), the place of residence of the addressees of these letters (Folmer, ibid.).

Aramaic in the State Administration

Aramaic was widely used in the central administration of the empire. In addition, two other former administrative languages were used: Elamite, the administrative language of the kingdom of Elam (present-day southwest Iran), and Late Babylonian, the principal administrative language of the Neo-Babylonian period. The most important evidence for the use of Aramaic in the central Achaemenid administration are the Fortification Tablets (FT) from Persepolis (the capital and administrative center of the empire from the time of Darius I). These tablets record food rations distributed to individuals connected to the royal palace. The majority of the approximately 15.000–18.000 tablets (dated 509–493) are written in Elamite. Many Elamite tablets possess a short Aramaic epigraph (259 of the 6200 Elamite tablets examined thus far; Azzoni and Stolper 2015, 5). These epigraphs belong to different phases of Persepolis' complicated administrative system for recording disbursements of commodities. Often these epigraphs refer to a(n Aramaic) copy which was made in a final phase of the administrative process, in one case specifically a copy on skin (FT 2187–101 *nsḫ ʿl mšk 1* "copied on 1 skin") (ibid., 24, 43), implying that part of the administration in Aramaic is irretrievably lost. At times Elamite tablets refer to "scribes on leather" (ibid., 44). There are also tablets written exclusively in Aramaic, reflecting different phases of the administrative processing of information (ibid., 5 n. 8; Stolper and Tavernier 2007, 2 mention 700–1000 [monolingual] Aramaic tablets). After 493, the documentation ends, possibly as a result of the administration's switch to the use of Aramaic (Kuhrt 1997, 650).[36]

Aramaic was also used in the administrative centers of other satrapies. There is evidence from several centers, notably Memphis (Egypt), Bactra (Bactria and Sogdiana) and Daskyleion (Phrygia; seal impressions on clay). Most of these texts are economic, but legal texts have also been found (Memphis).

Language Replacement

The linguistic situation in Palestine in the Achaemenid period deserves some special attention. After the beginning of the sixth century, writing in Hebrew almost completely disappeared. This rupture came about in connection with the Babylonian exile, which disrupted Judean society and changed the linguistic landscape completely. Instead of Hebrew, Aramaic came to be used as an administrative language in Palestine in the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid periods. Where Hebrew does appear, it is mostly on seal impressions and coins. These cases are generally interpreted as expressions of national consciousness and/or religious identity, as with the use of Hebrew in the Hasmonean period, and in the period of the second revolt against the Romans (Bar Kosiba) (Schniedewind 2006, 142–43).

Until recently, evidence for Aramaic sources from Palestine in the Achaemenid period was scarce. Today the amount of available evidence from this period has increased considerably with the Samaria papyri from Wadi Daliyeh and the ostraca from Idumea (both fourth century BCE). The latter have flooded the antiquities market since the beginning of the nineties.[37] Some 2000 items are known (more than half of them in private collections; the rest are in museum collections). The majority of these ostraca are so-called commodity chits, administrative texts which record the transfer of goods to another person or place. They paint a picture of the rural economy of southern Palestine in the late Achaemenid and early Hellenistic periods (fourth century).[38] The dates in these ostraca only occasionally contain the name of the ruling king, in contrast to those from the Hellenistic period, which usually do contain the names of rulers.[39] There are no ostraca datable to the reigns of Darius III (335–330) and Alexander the Great (330–323) (Porten and Yardeni 2014, xix–xx). In other words, there are no ostraca which document the transition from the Achaemenid to the Hellenistic period. The precise function of these ostraca is unclear (ibid., xxi) and they do not seem to have had an official character (ibid., xxi). Their importance lies primarily in the fact that they bear clear witness to the replacement of Hebrew with Aramaic as an administrative language for everyday purposes. In the same vein, the thirty-seven legal documents – mostly slave sales – from Wadi Daliyeh (Samaria papyri) from the middle of the fourth century show that Aramaic rather than Hebrew was the language of legal documents in Palestine in the Achaemenid period (Dušek 2007).

Post-Achaemenid Period and the Decline of Aramaic as a *Lingua Franca*

With the conquest of Alexander the Great in 330 BCE, the Achaemenid period came to an end. Aramaic texts from Bactria bear witness to the transition from the Achaemenid administration to the administration of Alexander the Great (Naveh and Shaked 2012; on the ostraca from Idumea, see above). These texts show that Aramaic did not lose its status as the official language of communication and administration overnight; only gradually did it give way to the new common language of communication and administration,

Greek. In fact, Aramaic continued to be used as an administrative language in Seleucid Babylonia (Uruk), furthering the centuries old administrative practice of writing Aramaic epigraphs on tablets written in Akkadian cuneiform (only some isolated examples are known; the latest dated example is from the middle of the second century BCE; see Zadok 2003, 570 no. 230).

Some linguistic characteristics of Achaemenid Official Aramaic survived into the Hellenistic and Roman periods (from ca. the second century BCE to the third century CE) in a number of local and regional Aramaic languages in Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, Iran, and North Arabia. These languages are usually grouped under the term "Middle Aramaic", a rather meaningless designation which masks the enormous diversity of written Aramaic in this period. A number of local vernacular languages turned into written languages in this period, and not just for practical reasons, but out of a wish to give expression to religious, cultural or ethnic identity, or in reaction to the dominance of Greek *koine* and its culture (Gzella 2015, ch. 5). The orthography of these languages resembles Achaemenid Official Aramaic in different degrees (Cook 1992, 19). Achaemenid Official Aramaic was the most prestigious and deeply rooted variant of written Aramaic in the region, and may have served to some extent to be imitated. Well-documented varieties are Nabatean Aramaic (Dead Sea region and northern Arabia), Aramaic from Palmyra (Syrian desert), Aramaic from Hatra and its surroundings (north Mesopotamia), Aramaic from pre-Christian Edessa (north Mesopotamia), and several Jewish varieties from Palestine (literary Qumran Aramaic, Jewish Aramaic, the Aramaic part of the Book of Daniel etc.) (for other examples, see Gzella 2015, ch. 5). These languages vary in the degree to which, on the one hand, they preserve or imitate characteristic – often orthographic – features of Achaemenid Official Aramaic and, on the other hand, to which they demonstrate features characteristic of later Western and Eastern Aramaic languages (Cook 1992). Nabatean Aramaic is a written language which strongly resembles Achaemenid Official Aramaic, both in its orthography and in its preservation of certain linguistic forms; it can more or less be considered a continuation of Achaemenid Official Aramaic (Gzella 2015, 238–40). The deep rootedness of Official Aramaic in areas under former Achaemenid rule is clearly demonstrated in the survival of certain traits of Official Aramaic in modern Neo-Aramaic dialects (see Hopkins 1989 and Khan 2007, 13–14 on the verbal construction *qṭil-li* "I killed" [and, by analogical extension, *qim-li* "I rose"] in North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic and Ṭuroyo).

NOTES

1 This region is part of a larger area, known as the Jezirah ('island'), located between the Euphrates and the Tigris in northeast Syria, northwest Iraq and southern Turkey ('northern Mesopotamia').

2 At any rate, the multilingual situation in Assyria was a concern of the Neo-Assyrian rulers. Sargon II (722-705) boasts in his annals that he brought one language of communication to the peoples from the four quarters (of the earth) involved in the construction of his new capital Dur-Šarruken ('I made them of one mouth') (on this text, see Fales 2007a, 111 n. 68; 2010, 189 n. 3).

3 This view is shared by Parpola (2004, 15), who sees Imperial Aramaic as a language created by the Neo-Assyrian Empire, different from the language spoken by ethnic Arameans.
4 The suggestion made by Radner (2014, 84) that the two scribes already co-occur on a relief from the reign of Shalmanaser III (reign 858-824) is uncertain. According to Schachner (2007, 44), the two scribes (one bearded and the other beardless) hold an identical object in their hands, possibly a clay tablet. It is not possible to identify the two scribes on this relief on the basis of their scribal attributes.
5 Most of the Aramean scribes listed by Radner are found in tablets from Nineveh from the first half of the 7th century (see the name list in Radner 1997, 94-124).
6 The Aramaic Aḥiqar story (known from a 5th century version from Elephantine) is situated at the court of Sennacherib and Esarhaddon, and yet has left no trace in Akkadian literature from this period. Linguistic evidence suggests it is most likely a later composition. The absence of Persian loanwords in the story is nevertheless remarkable.
7 Based on numbers given in Fales 2010, 191. Fales counts 250 published and 250 unpublished Aramaic inscriptions. Since Fales' publication, new Aramaic texts have been published, notably the 183 Aramaic monolingual texts from Dūr-Katlimmu. The Aramaic epigraphs (accompanying the Neo-Assyrian inscriptions) were published in Radner 2002.
8 It is remarkable not just that this Assyrian high-official answers in Judean (= Hebrew), but that he is familiar with a lower register of the language (cp. the *ketiv* of Isa 36:12; II Kgs 18:27). This strengthens Tadmor's suggestion that he (or the person who prepared his speech) was of Israelite descent (Tadmor 1982, 452 n. 45).
9 For general information, see www.schechhamad.de (accessed 31-03-2017).
10 These legal documents show that the scribes–though well trained in the cuneiform script and the Assyrian language–were not able to handle the Akkadian stative correctly (there are many examples of a disagreement between subject and stative form, even in the 3 sg. m.) (Radner 2002, 21-22). The scribes behind the tablets were probably Arameans, even though most of them bear Assyrian names (Radner 2011, 398-399; also Radner, 2002, 21).
11 Parpola refers to the names of the wives of Sargon (Ataliā), Tiglathpileser (Yabâ) and Sennacherib (Naqiā). The wife of the latter is also the mother of Esarhaddon. Approximately 25-30% of the personal names from this period are West Semitic (Fales 2010, 190).
12 Radner 2014, 86 (SAA 16 99). Fales, however, dates the text to the time of Esarhaddon (Fales 2007a, 142 n. 9 [on Harper ABL 872]). In SAA 19 23, 3 Qurdi-Aššur-lamur, the sender of the letter addressed to the king, refers to a sealed Aramaic letter by Nabushezib (an official in Tyrus) which he has been asked to forward to the palace (*kaniku annitu* KUR.*armitu* 'this sealed Aramaic letter'). Qurdi-Aššur-lamur was the governor of Ṣimirra (Syria) from 738 onward (see SAA 19 48). For these texts see http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/saao/corpus (accessed 06-04-2017).
13 There is a reference in the letter to another letter, but whether this letter was also written in Aramaic is unknown. (l. 4).
14 Footage of the cleaning of ostraca can be viewed in a recently published film fragment about the early excavations in ancient Nineveh led by Reginald Campbell Thompson

in the late twenties / early thirties of the twentieth century (http://royalasiaticsociety.org/film-footage-of-excavations-in-iraq/; accessed 24-03-2017).

15 On the circumstances of these bronzes, see Fales 1995. The lion weights were possibly looted (in war time) and provided with an Assyrian, as well as a second Aramaic, inscription (Fales 1995, 54).

16 These administrative texts are often labelled as texts from the State Archives of Assyria (Fales 2007b, 140; Fales 2007a, 96). This is a somewhat confusing term as it lumps together under one banner a wide variety of documents written in Neo-Assyrian for everyday purposes. Fales (2007b, 140) mentions administrative lists, legal documents, letters, international treaties, and oracles as examples of texts to be distinguished from texts written in Babylonian (such as historiographic texts and royal inscriptions).

17 In addition, there exist receipts and records of court decisions. For the figure of 6000, see Radner 2003, 884. The same number is found on http://www.ucl.ac.uk/sargon/privatelegaldocuments/. Last updated 31-12-2015 (accessed 05-11-2017).

18 On the correlation between the form and content of tablets, see Radner 2011, 396-99. See also Radner 1997, 23-4.

19 I prefer, like Azzoni and Stolper (2015, 2), to use the neutral term 'epigraph'.

20 At least some of these tablets–those without holes–may have been independent documents (see Fales 2007b, 148 n. 30; also Lemaire 2001, 69). See also Fales 2000, 120-122 ("self-sufficient legal document").

21 The most recent (significant) publications of these texts are Bachelot and Fales 2005, Lipiński 2010 and Röllig 2014. For references to older publications, see Fales 1986 and Lemaire 2001.

22 Rieneke Sonnevelt (Leiden University) is currently doing her PhD research on Aramaic epigraphs on clay tablets from Babylonia in the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid periods. Her dissertation addresses many important sociolinguistic questions and will fill an important gap.

23 Jursa 2014a, 96-97 refers to Nabopolossar (626-605) (Chaldean Dakkuru tribe), Neriglissar (559-556; Aramean Puqudu tribe) and Nabonidus (555-539) (Aramean or Chaldean).

24 This label is commonly used to refer to Babylonian sources from the beginning of the Neo-Babylonian period (626) to the latest known texts in Babylonian (1st century CE).

25 This figure is based on Azzoni and Stolper 2015, 3. For an overview, see Zadok 2003 (233 items) and Oelsner 2006 (274 items). The overview includes several items from the post-Achaemenid period.

26 It is telling that the language of the letter is colored by several Akkadian loanwords (*pḫh* 'governor' l. 9, *mt'* 'the land' l. 9, and possibly *ngw' znh* 'this commander' l. 8).

27 Late Babylonian was not completely replaced by Aramaic in the state correspondence. Some eighteen royal letters in Late Babylonian have survived in temple archives (Jursa 2014a, 100).

28 Zadok 2003, 559 estimates that 1% of Late Babylonian tablets bear Aramaic epigraphs (including those from the Late Babylonian period).

29 The tablet gives rise to several questions concerning the function of the Babylonian text and the Aramaic epigraph: why is there a Babylonian text if both debtor and creditor were capable of reading and/or writing Aramaic, and for whom was the Aramaic epigraph intended? Perhaps for a person with an administrative function? See also Tolini 2014, 75-76.

30 Pearce and Wunsch 2014, nos. 10, 40, 41, 42, 53, 71b, 102. Traces of alphabet signs are to be found in ibidem, nos. 1, 37 and 52.

31 For instance, in ibidem, no. 11 (Cyrus 533), where both creditor and debtor have full Hebrew names.

32 The issue of Late Babylonian as a spoken language, as well as the influence of Aramaic on Late Babylonian, will be addressed by Johannes Hackl in a forthcoming article.

33 Unfortunately there are no Aramaic sources from this region and period to support this assumption (see also Folmer 1995, 749).

34 It is not certain if this letter was written in Babylonia (2.6). If it was, it is uncertain if it reflects a Babylonian variety of Aramaic, as Gzella seems to suggest. The two features shared by the Assur ostracon and Achaemenid Official Aramaic cannot be linked to other Aramaic sources from this period and region: the infinitive *pe. l'mr* and the independent personal pronoun pl.3m. *hmw* in the direct object slot (instead of the obj. pron. sf.). The first of these features is problematic, as it concerns an archaic form with a specialized function (see Folmer 1995, 189-90), while the second could also represent an independent innovation (moreover, the evidence for *hmw* is not clear-cut; see *'klthm* in l. 17). As such, the two features have little diagnostic value. Unfortunately, there is no evidence for the presence of nasalization in the Assur ostracon (on the contrary: see *'t* 'you' < * *'nt* in ll. 2 and 19).

35 I do not take into consideration here the remaining Aramaic texts from Bactria, which also include several letters (B1-10).

36 The 163 Aramaic inscriptions on mortars, pestles, and stones from the Persepolis Treasury (Schwiderski 2004) likewise attest to the widespread use of Aramaic within the administrative centers of the empire.

37 The term Idumean ostraca is an umbrella term for ostraca from the south of Palestine datable to the Achaemenid and Hellenistic periods. Even though they do not derive from controlled excavations, the authenticity of only some of these ostraca is in doubt (Porten and Yardeni 2014, xvii-xix).

38 Porten and Yardeni are currently bringing together all these ostraca–both published and unpublished–in a multi-volume work entitled *Textbook of Aramaic Ostraca from Idumea*, of which two volumes have so far been published (Porten and Yardeni 2014; 2016). Approximately 700 ostraca have been published previously, principally by André Lemaire. See Porten and Yardeni 2014, xv-xvi, for an overview.

39 There is evidence from the last years of Artaxerxes II (docs. 365-359) up to Arses (Artaxerxes IV) (docs. 337-336), and for Philip III of Macedon (docs. 322-316) up to the first two decades of the rule of Ptolemy I of Egypt (docs. 322-302) (Porten and Yardeni 2014, xix-xx).

ABBREVIATIONS

SAA State Archives of Assyria
SAA 16 Luukko and Van Buylaere 2002
SAA 17 Dietrich 2003
SAA 19 Luukko 2013
TAD A Porten and Yardeni 1986, vol. 1.

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PART IV

LANGUAGE CONTACT IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Sumerian and Akkadian Language Contact

C. Jay Crisostomo[1]

Introduction

Contact between Sumerian and Akkadian – or better, Semitic – represents the oldest recorded occurrence of language contact. The languages were part of a larger linguistic continuum that ranged throughout Mesopotamia. Sumerian and Semitic had likely been interacting long before we encounter these languages in writing. As such, we may never have a good understanding of "pure" Sumerian, particularly given the lack of comparative linguistic data for Sumerian. It is therefore difficult to gauge exactly how much contact has influenced language evolution. Nevertheless, the sustained period of at least 3000 years of contact within the region resulted in some convergence and contact-induced change.

The complexities of discussing Sumerian–Akkadian language contact cannot be overemphasized. Modern scholarship became enlightened to the phenomenon of Sumerian–Akkadian language contact not long after the initial decipherment of cuneiform (see Marsal 2014; Daniels, this volume). Since then, Assyriologists have adopted varying strategies to handle the linguistic situation as presented through the textual remains. The present contribution focuses on the social aspects of these two languages as demonstrated in written remains. I concentrate here on methodological complications, emphasizing linguistic overlap rather than differentiation. In addition, my discussion considers variation as a product of language users, provides a broad social history of these languages in contact, and finally summarizes suggested contact-induced changes.

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Sources and Methodologies for Sumerian–Akkadian Contact

As P. Michalowski has emphasized (this volume), even our understanding of the basics of Sumerian grammar is suspect, given our inability to separate language from writing. Moreover, our versions of Sumerian grammar and lexicography are prejudiced by the Akkadian-influenced construct with which we and the first decipherers of Sumerian have been forced to reckon. Native grammatical paradigms, extensively programmatic though they are, emphasize supposed, indeed even imaginary, shared similarities to Akkadian rather than describing actual structural overlap (Black 2004). Furthermore, our terms Sumerian and Akkadian encompass a variety of written dialects and languages, which may not reveal much about what was surely an assortment of spoken dialects. Such is the nature of our data. We must therefore examine the sources and methodological considerations which inform and govern the present discussion.

Sources

Sources for studying Sumerian–Akkadian contact vary, with unequal distribution across 3000 years of written documentation. Similarly, the data cannot be granted identical validity and must be critically evaluated, although each source is informative in some way. In general, we can consider three types of sources: metalinguistic data, bilingual and translated texts, and archival documents.

Metalinguistic Data

These sources include word lists (lexical lists) and lists of grammatical forms (grammatical texts and mixed vocabularies). The metalinguistic data, while extensive and potentially informative, must be treated with extreme caution. These lists are the by-products of scholarly reflection and speculation upon the languages and writing system. As a result, they may present forms and lexemes that do not accurately represent either language, especially Sumerian.

While the word lists provide interesting data on how signs could be read, possible loan words, innovations in morphological structure, or implications about semantic ranges, they are infrequently presented in an explicitly bilingual format until the middle of the second millennium. For the casual reader, unilingual word lists are rarely useful for understanding language contact. Later lists offer translations, occasionally in multiple languages, and are useful as possible aids in lexicographic research.

Lists of grammatical forms are, potentially, obvious sources for linguistic contact. These lists, with few exceptions, are bilingual Sumerian–Akkadian. One particular list type, grammatical paradigms, juxtapose Sumerian and Akkadian morphologies, ostensibly providing a great resource for analyzing similarities between the two languages (Sumerian is represented in **bold** type and Akkadian is represented in ***bold italic*** type).

he$_2$-de$_3$-ib$_2$-gub-bu-un-ne	***li-iz-zi-zu-ni-in-*[*ni*]**	They shall make me stand
mu-ni-ib$_2$-gub-bu-un-ne	***uz-za-az-zu-ni-in-*[*ni*]**	They make me stand
mu-un-ne-da-gub-be$_2$-en	***uz-zi-zu-ni-in-*[*ni*]**	They made me stand
ba-an-ne-da-gub-be$_2$-en	***uš-ta-zi-iz-zu-ni-in-*[*ni*]**	They made me stand up
mi-ni-ib$_2$-gub-bu-un-ne	***uz-za-az-⌐zu¬***	They make it stand
in-ne-en-gub-be$_2$-e-eš	***uz-zi-⌐zu¬***	They made it stand
ba-an-ne-en-gub-be$_2$-e-eš	***uš-ta-zi-iz-⌐zu¬***	They made it stand up

(http://oracc.org/dcclt/P431315 obv 9–16)

As Veldhuis (2016) remarks, the Akkadian for this particular paradigm is straightforward. The Sumerian, however, contains many rare or irregular forms such as **mu-un-ne-da-gub-be$_2$-en**, where the plural agent is expressed on the comitative ("with them") and the patient ("me") is suffixed on the verb, analogous to the Akkadian ***uzzīzūninni***. The text systematically equates interlingual morphologies such as **nam-** = ***lā***, resulting in bizarre Sumerian forms such as **nam-in-ne-en-gub-be-en-ze$_2$-en** = ***lā tuzzīzā*** "you (pl.) should not make it stand" (obv 23). These grammatical paradigms thus emphasize Sumerian morphemes that may share functionality with Akkadian counterparts, exaggerating or even creating linguistic overlap as well as supplementing non-existent forms in order to complete the paradigms. With careful consideration, however, these grammatical lists and paradigms offer insights into possible points of grammatical contact.

Bilingual and Translated Texts

Beginning in the early second millennium, texts are occasionally presented as more than unilingual. Some were fully or partially bilingual; others were primarily unilingual with intermittent Akkadian glosses. Some fully or partially bilingual texts preserve native structures of both languages, granting insight into comparable syntactical structures. Conversely, some of the translations adopt source language syntax – such tokens could be interepreted as syntactical constructions which scribes had difficulty commensurating.

Multiple texts were translated, often from Sumerian to Akkadian, and inscribed on different objects. Royal inscriptions were particularly targeted for translation (Galter 1995). Some literary texts were submitted to translation, such as the Sumerian "Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld" translated into Akkadian as Tablet XII of the standard "Epic of Gilgamesh." Other literary texts were adapted and redacted as more or less variant Akkadian compositions, such as "Inana's Descent to the Netherworld" condensed and altered as "Ishtar's Descent."

Archival Documents

Archival documents illustrate better than any other text-types the difficulty in differentiating languages and isolating linguistic features as belonging to one or the other language. The use of the writing system in archival texts often obscures which language is actually the vehicle of communication (see below). As such, these sources are critical for formulating our understanding of the interconnectedness and pervasiveness of Sumerian–Akkadian language contact and overlap.

Methodological Concerns

In assessing the level of contact between Sumerian and Semitic, some fundamental methodological caveats/constraints require attention. Since Sumerian is a linguistic isolate, it is often difficult for us to determine which features are native to the language and which are imported from other languages, including Semitic. Over the long history of the language, we are never afforded a view of Sumerian that is not already affected by contact with Semitic (Civil 1984, 76).

Modern ideas of Sumerian grammar are further impinged, as most of our knowledge of Sumerian is understood through Akkadian, particularly through the scholarly metalinguistic exercises reviewed above. Moreover, the writing system obfuscates many features, including, but not limited to, phonology, morphology, semantics, and even syntax. In other words, the nature of our data limits our ability to understand Sumerian as a linguistic entity without recourse to its relationship to Akkadian. As a result, from a modern scientific perspective, the ability to linguistically disambiguate between Sumerian and Akkadian/Semitic is not always as certain as Assyriologists would like to imagine.

Given the intensity of Semitic influence on Sumerian, it is not impossible to posit a scenario in which what we know as Sumerian – or the dialect clusters which we group under the umbrella "Sumerian" – constitutes something of a mixed language, adopting aspects and features from Semitic languages as well as documented and undocumented languages that existed in the region. This suggestion is, of course, exceedingly speculative and, without presumed other languages, impossible to verify (but see the attempt in Høyrup 1992). I raise the possibility to underscore the murkiness of documented Sumerian and the dramatic nature of Sumerian–Semitic contact. Nevertheless, we can acknowledge that Sumerian displays certain features reminiscent of contact languages – although many other basic features would be atypical for contact languages – while simultaneously maintaining that much of our confusion emerges from misunderstandings regarding the writing system and/or writing practices.

As demonstrated and emphasized repeatedly in contact language studies, the study of linguistic contact cannot be separated from the agency of language speakers, the so-called speech community (see Gumperz 2001). For the study of Sumerian or early Semitic contact, we have no access to native speakers. It is doubtful whether we have access to speakers at all (cf. Michalowski 2006, 175). Our written sources, however, depict the choices of *somebodies*, whether they are scribes or speakers. We may therefore invoke the principles of linguistic communities and the associated effects stemming from contact. Nevertheless, as already formulated, we must recognize that we are only enabled to discuss the *written varieties* of the languages rather than the speech situations or the linguistic communities that produce these artifacts.

Sociolinguistically and anthropologically informed work on multilingualism in cuneiform culture has only recently become an object of extended inquiry. Historical linguistic and traditional philological methods have typically been the basis for research on the topic. As a result, concrete theoretical frameworks for examining cuneiform data relevant for studying multilingualism and language contact remain underdeveloped. In this, Assyriology trails behind our Classicist, biblical, and South Asian studies counterparts, who have produced important studies on ancient sociolinguistics in recent years, with approaches that are variously applicable to cuneiform culture.

Language Use

Sociolinguistics distinguishes itself from historical linguistics by explicitly acknowledging that social factors are fundamental to the study of language contact. Cuneiform texts are the products of language users who effect some degree of agency on the texts they compose or copy. These actors are themselves habitualized and socialized. I discuss some general social factors that impacted language choice and may therefore have influenced linguistic change or other aspects related to this contact situation.

Alloglottography

Alloglottography – the documentation of a language in a script or writing of a different language than that in which it was intended to be read – presents a particular problem for Sumerian–Akkadian contact. As Rubio (2006) has described, a degree of alloglottography is inherent in cuneiform texts, since Sumerograms are a fixture to varying degrees in Akkadian texts. Civil and Rubio have posited five hypothetical styles relating writing and reading in cuneiform texts:

1. Written and read in Sumerian
2. Written and read in Semitic
3. Written in Sumerian and read in Semitic
4. Written in Sumerian and read in Semiticized Sumerian (Civil and Rubio 1999)
5. Written in Semitic (Akkadian) and read in Sumerian (Civil 1984, 76; Rubio 2006, 44).

Civil warns, "The presence of bound morphemes of a given language does not unequivocally identify this language as the one in which the text is read or even composed" (Civil 1984, 76). Moreover, the categories stipulated reflect a conception that each text represents only a single language. More likely – as studies on modern multilingualism have shown – readers of cuneiform texts could move fluidly between languages or even allow the languages to intertwine at various structural levels (cf. also Cooper 1995). I therefore propose two additional styles:

6. Written in either Sumerian or Semitic and read variously in one or the other
7. Written in either Sumerian or Semitic and read in mixed Sumerian/Semitic

Relevant to this discussion are representations of personal names, especially during the third millennium. Discussions of the "death" of Sumerian have drawn upon naming practices as evidence for the vitality of Sumerian through the end of the third millennium (for example, Sallaberger 2004). Not only are such data methodologically suspect (see especially Civil 2013, 12–14), but arguments based on the supposed linguistic background of names often fail to account for writing practices. It is probable that many orthographic Sumerian names represented Akkadian or Semitic names – so a name such as **Lu**$_2$-DN ("Man of DN") could, in fact, represent the etymologically Akkadian name ***awīl***-DN.

I suggest, then, that we cannot verify what language(s) many texts or even individual textual segments represented to any particular reader or speaker. Perhaps some texts could

even be interpreted differently by each individual reader. Alloglottography introduces a level of complexity in analyzing Sumerian–Akkadian language contact that we must acknowledge as a social factor, but that we cannot fully disentangle.

Ideology

Very few metalinguistic comments which grant insight into language ideology or prescriptive attitudes have been preserved. The most explicit evidence for language ideology emerges from the scribal schools during the Old Babylonian (OB) period (c. nineteenth to seventeenth centuries BCE). Several compositions iterate the importance, even exclusivity of Sumerian within the field – unsurprising since learning Sumerian was one of the principle goals of scribal education and, moreover, as Veldhuis and others have argued, an essential element for socializing student scribes into the scribal community (see Veldhuis 2004). Some statements indicate that within the social field of scribal education, Sumerian was ideologically considered the premier language against other languages, particularly Akkadian (see further Crisostomo 2015, 163–168).

> The one (in charge of) Sumerian (said): "He spoke Akkadian!" Then he caned me." (Eduba A: 40)

> "Do not neglect Sumerian! Once more, I am responding to you in correct language." (Sumerian Epistolary Miscellany 22: 3–4)[2]

Additionally, letters from Yasmah-Addu (ruled c. 1795–1776 BCE), king of Mari, to his father Shamshi-Adad (ruled 1807–1775), ruler of the Kingdom of Upper Mesopotamia, indicate that while Akkadian was the language of diplomatic correspondence between the two rulers, Sumerian was held as a prestigious and scholarly language and Amorite was the language of Yasmah-Addu's people (Ziegler and Charpin 2007).

Choice and Identity

Social indicators may be stereotypically associated with linguistic features, including entire languages (Silverstein 1976). Such social caricatures imbue languages with potential power, and language users may seek to take advantage, desiring to be associated with particular groups or to be imbued with certain characteristics. These social indexicalities of language may be linked with particular social fields (Sairio and Palander-Collin 2014, 627–628).

One striking example is that of Bēlānum of Sippar-Amnānum who changed his etymologically Akkadian name to Ur-Utu, an etymologically Sumerian name, corresponding to his appointment to the office of chief lamenter, a role particularly associated with discourse and performance conducted in Sumerian (Löhnert 2008, 2011, 2014; Delnero 2015). Ur-Utu's case is not unique; many religious personnel during the period had etymologically Sumerian names. Rather, he is exemplary because knowing both his names, we can reasonably postulate that his name alternation marked a particular linguistic–professional identity construction (see Tanret 2011).

Another social field in which language indexical value contributed to identity construction was the field of OB scribal education. In accordance with ideological values, curricular texts were almost exclusively composed in Sumerian, especially at Nippur. Thus, during the early half of the second millennium Sumerian was largely associated with scholarly texts including literary compositions, liturgies, many incantations, and some legal documentation. Akkadian, meanwhile, was used primarily for administrative documentation, scholarly divination, private letters, some incantations, and only occasional literary works.

Categorizing Sumerian–Akkadian usage during the OB and later periods as diglossic is, however, too simplistic (see also Hasselbach-Andee, this volume). Rather, forms of languages were more appropriate in various social domains than others. Such deliberations of situational language use require a broad sociolinguistic history of Sumerian–Akkadian contact.

Sociolinguistic History of Sumerian–Semitic Contact

Among the numerous languages undoubtedly in use in the ancient Near East, textual evidence underscores Sumerian–Akkadian (Semitic) contact. By the time of the earliest linguistically intelligible written documents (c. 2600 BCE), Sumerian and Semitic languages had already sustained extensive contact. The story of the contact between these two language groups encompasses before these written documents and continues until the end of the first millennium BCE (and likely beyond), even though Sumerian ceased to be widely spoken as a native vernacular by 2000 BCE and Akkadian similarly fell into vernacular disuse by the middle of the first millennium.

Pre-Written Contact History (Pre-3200 BCE)

For obvious reasons, little can be said about the evidence for pre-written linguistic contact. For years, much of the discussion focused on so-called pre-Sumerian substrates. Rubio (1999) has satisfactorily demonstrated that many words previously thought to have belonged to these substrates could instead be considered Sumerian, Semitic, or various *Kulturwörter* and *Wanderwörter*. It seems certain then that Sumerian and Semitic enjoyed some degree of contact perhaps many years before writing was invented. Early loanwords such as the possible **ba+dar** "knife" from Uruk III (c. 3000), **šudur** "a heavy garment" found in early word lists, the common word **a-ru$_{12}$-da** (= **uruda**) "copper," and other loans in the well-attested Professions list (Sommerfeld 2006, 50–51) suggest long-sustained contact that may reach back to pre-written history.

Early Contact History (c. 2900–2000)

Texts from around 2600 BCE from the sites of Fara (ancient Šuruppak) and Abu-Salabikh provide the first certain evidence of language contact. Etymologically Semitic names appear in the colophons of tablets, with Sumerian comprising the main body of the text (Biggs 1966, 1967) and Semitic names occur within the administrative documentation from both Abu-Salabikh and Fara (Pomponio 1987, 1991; Westenholz 1988).

Conservatively, these names demonstrate basic linguistic contact; optimistically, they indicate the existence of multiple language groups or multilingual populations in the vicinity of these ancient sites.

Pre-sargonic land sale inscriptions document extensive Sumerian–Semitic contact, including orthographic code switching (Johanson 2013). The Maništušu obelisk, for example, represents a text largely written in (apparent) Sumerian interspersed with undeniably Semitic features, suggesting a Semitic text written as mostly Sumerian.

šu-niĝin$_2$ 10 **ĝuruš**	Total: 10 workers
***be-lu* gana$_2$**	lord of the fields
gu$_7$ kug-babbar	recepients of the payment
gana$_2$ ***ša-at e$_2$-ki-im***	of the field of Ekim
ù zi-ma-na-ak	and Zimanak (B viii 8–12)

The Maništušu obelisk represents only one of several examples of Semitic texts written using Sumerian orthographies. This example illustrates the fluidity of writing and language. We might interpret the text as Semitic, signalled by such features as the declinable relative pronoun ***šat*** or the conjunction ***ù*** or the word ***bēlū***, despite the text as a whole presenting as mostly Sumerian, an instance of alloglottography or biscriptality. We might also consider this text as an example of extensive intra-sentential code switching.

In the middle of the third millennium when the Akkadian kings centralized power in Sumer and Akkad, they instituted their own local variety of Akkadian as a bureaucratic language alongside Sumerian (Keetman 2014). B. Foster characterizes language use during the period: "[T]he elite used both Akkadian and Sumerian. Rather than making distinctions on the basis of spoken or native language, they often wrote to each other in Akkadian, but when they wrote to the king they preferred Sumerian, as the cultural language of the realm … In day-to-day activity, Akkadian record-keepers wrote both languages, sometimes in the same document" (Foster 2016, 213). The Mesag archive is well-noted for the many mixed language texts in its dossier (Markina 2012). One often cited document from the period provides an interesting contrast between Sumerian and Akkadian.

> Lugalazida, the slave of Lugalkigal, escaped from (the) Ensi. (About) his hiding place, the slave girl of Urnigin said:
>
> "He lives in Maškan-šapir. He should be brought here."
>
> [^{m}]**lugal-a$_2$-zi-da arad$_2$ lugal-ki-gal-la ensi$_2$-da in-da-zah$_3$ ki zah-a-na geme$_2$ ur-nigin$_3$ ba-dug$_4$**
>
> ***in* maš-ka$_3$-ni^{ki}**-[ŠA]$_{BRA}$ ***u-⌐ša¬-ab ⌐li-rw^{i}-u$_3$-nim¬*** (Westenholz 1975, 36)

Michalowski comments, "The *language of writing* for this particular scribe and his intellectual milieu was Sumerian, but in reporting stylized direct speech he acknowledged that the vernacular in his world was already Akkadian, although it is also most probable that the formulation of the latter was no less formalized as the former" (Michalowski 2006, 172).

By the last century of the third millennium, the Ur III kings had apparently (re)instituted Sumerian as the primary written language of state bureaucracy. Although the majority of the textual documentation dealing with state affairs is composed in Sumerian,

a number of texts from the period demonstrate that Akkadian continued to be an influential language. Moreover, since so many of the administrative documents are fairly a-syntactic and utilize standard administrative terminology, it is not impossible to understand them as representing Akkadian.

Texts from the vicinity of Garshana, dealing with the affairs of a royal estate, present an interesting case. Many of the texts in this archive include linguistic variations to the administrative texts from the main state and provincial archives. W. Sallaberger (2011) analyzed these texts as the products of native Akkadian speakers who acquired prestige Sumerian through regular contact with native Sumerian speakers. He interprets tokens of "defective" Sumerian as products of the native Akkadian-speaking scribes who inadequately learned Sumerian. While Sallaberger marshalls much interesting data, an alternative analysis could understand these same tokens as reflections of geographical disparity or perhaps differences in institutional writing practices. In other words, our comprehension of the variegations resulting from multilingual contact remains occluded, in part due to the writing system and our failures to understand writing practices as well as our own assumptions about what constitutes Sumerian and Akkadian.

Late Contact History (c. 2000 BCE–78 CE)

By the beginning of the second millennium, Sumerian had almost certainly faded away as a widely spoken language (Cooper 1973; Sallaberger 2004; Michalowski 2006; Woods 2006), although it continued to evolve even as a written language (Brisch 2007). Nevertheless, during the OB period, bilingualism and translation became more prominent in the textual record, although the explicit use of both Akkadian and Sumerian on the same physical object remained irregular. Certain genres of text or particular compositions were almost always (re)produced bilingually, but these are exceptions. Bilingual and mixed language sources are relatively more common from northern sites such as Sippar and Babylon than southern sites such as Nippur, but these generalities are not always maintained. School contexts from Ur, for example, feature more mixed language exemplars than those at Nippur.

Akkadian interference occurs within the literary Sumerian of the period (see Zólyomi 2005). At least in the scholarly texts which comprise much of our exposure to Sumerian–Akkadian bilingualism, the demarcation between the two languages is not so extreme. There is a sense in which the scholars who wrote these texts create a linguistic register that exists in the interlingual space between Sumerian and Akkadian, where the cuneiform writing system supersedes linguistic differentiation. The result is not a mixed language in our modern sociolinguistic terms (Bakker 2003; see Lim and Ansaldo 2016, 11–12), since neither grammar nor lexicon are regularly intertwined (although some of that exists). Instead, meaning is created in the combination of the two languages interacting together through the writing system cultivated by scholarly habits of knowledge-making.

Many legal documents from the OB period present as Sumerian, but likely represented Akkadian (Schorr 1909). Some documents show variations between the tablet and corresponding envelope, with one object depicting a phrase or word as Sumerian and the counterpart offering the same phrase or word in syllabic Akkadian. Towards the end of the OB period, in some cities, some stock Sumerian legal phrases, such as the oath formula, were regularly given in a mixed language format as well as in a pseudo-Sumerian formulation (Crisostomo 2015; cf. Pientka 1998, 147–175).

During the Middle Babylonian period (latter half of the second millennium), cuneiform culture extended across the ancient Near East, spreading Sumerian and Akkadian sources throughout the ancient world. Sumerian literary production waned, whereas literature in Akkadian expanded. Many Sumerian literary or scholarly texts occur with Akkadian translations; only a limited set of Sumerian compositions survived beyond the OB period (Bartelmus 2016; Viano 2016; Yamada and Shibata 2016).

By the first millennium, Aramaic had presumably superseded either language as the predominant spoken and bureaucratic language(s) of the region (Sanders, this volume). Both Sumerian and Akkadian were constricted in use, specifically to the traditionally cuneiform fields of scholarship, ritual, liturgy, letters, and administrative and legal documentation. One notable sociolinguistic feature of late Sumerian was the use of non-lexical Sumerian incantations (*uoces magicae*), a feature which demonstrates the magical power associated with the idea of the language, without recourse to linguistic fidelity (Veldhuis 1999; Blom 2012). Sumerian rarely appeared apart from Akkadian. In some ways, the survival of Sumerian was dependent upon the survival of Akkadian. As long as cuneiform persisted, the prestige languages associated with cuneiform also endured. The two languages thus continued their interconnected contact relationship primarily in the form of scholarly bilingual texts until the end of the cuneiform culture.

Contact-Induced Changes

Given such a long, interconnected linguistic history, language evolution stemming from contact is inevitable. Nearly every fomal linguistic alteration suggested as resulting from Sumerian–Akkadian contact is contested. Moreover, our data are so limited and uneven that it is impossible to trace either the causes or the diffusion of language change in either language, particularly major social factors that may have instigated such changes. Finally, we must again recognize that other languages within the area may have either accelerated certain structural changes or may have been the ultimate origin from which Sumerian and/or Akkadian adopted features. The following provides an overview of salient suggested contact-induced changes in formal structure.

Lexical Borrowing

Lexical borrowing appears to be the only certain means of assessing the magnitude of linguistic intertwining given the ambiguity and contention regarding possible changes in structural features. As Edzard has recognized, similar stock phrases and metaphors are common in both languages (Edzard 2003, 175). These may represent (near) calques if not products of common culture. As Civil warns, however, determining directionality of a borrowing is somewhat speculative. He offers four possibilities (Civil 2007, 14):

1. "Proto-Akkadian" > Sumerian, without survival into any known stages of Akkadian
2. Semitic (but not Akkadian) > Sumerian
3. Unknown/alternative language > Sumerian and/or Akkadian
4. Sumerian > Semitic

Regarding (3), the so-called "Sumerian problem" focused on words of supposedly unknown origin and postulated a pre-Sumerian substrate. Rubio has argued there are fewer such words than initially supposed (Rubio 1999). Nevertheless, several lexical items such as **ganzer** "flame" or **ašgab** "leather worker" (Rubio 1999, 3) still elude etymological analysis; they are likely vestiges of unknown or undocumented languages.

Semitic to Sumerian

As Civil contends, the number of Semitic loans into Sumerian is "significant and consonant with the coexistence of Sumerian- and Semitic-speaking populations that must have taken place from the dawn of history" (Civil 2007, 17). Many such words are widely recognized such as **silim** < √*slm* (Akk. ***šalmu***, ***salāmu***) "well-being"; **gin** < **kwn* (***kânu***) "to establish"; **arad** < √*wrd* (***wardu***) "slave"; and u < **wa* (***u***) "and." Civil's study of Semitic loanwords with the pattern $C_1V_1C_2V_1C_3$ remains the most methodologically rigorous study of Semitic to Sumerian loans (see also Steiner 2003; Sommerfeld 2006; Keetman 2013). Many Semitic loans exhibit similarly regular patterns. Some of these loans demonstrate phonological changes even before their first appearance in a written text, such as Sum. **ušum** "(a mythological) snake" from √*bṭn* (Ebl. *bušum*, Akk. ***bašmu***, Arb. *baṭan*) via **wušum* (Civil 2007, 12 n6). It is further possible that words that modern Assyriologists might term loans, especially those written syllabically, such as **be$_4$-lu$_5$-da** from ***bēlūtum*** may never have been adopted into the Sumerian lexicon as a productive form, but could instead be regarded as a *Fremdwort* or may reflect a codeswitch into Semitic or indicate that the text as a whole was in fact read in Semitic.

Some words have been borrowed from Semitic into Sumerian, before being borrowed back into Akkadian. Such words include Sem. √*spr*² > Sum. **zabar** > Akk. ***siparru*** "bronze"; √*wsm* > **ezem** > ***isinnu*** "festival"; and ***biṣṣūru*** (√*bnẓr*) "vulva" > **be$_5$-en-ze$_2$-er** > ***penzurru*** "spider web."

One final category of Semitic to Sumerian loans are apparent loans which formulate as Sumerian compound verbs (Karahashi 2004). These include **sa—gaz** (Akk. ***šagāšu***) "to rob; murder," **saĝ—rig$_7$** (***šarāku***) "to donate," **ne—su-ub** (***našāqu***) "to kiss," **šu—hu-uz** (***šūhuzu***, Š of ***ahāzu***) "to set on fire," **šu—bal** (***šupêlu***) "to exchange." In such cases, the first syllable of an Akkadian verb is separated as the nominal part of a compound verb and grammatically marked as necessary; the remaining part of the Akkadian verb forms the Sumerian verbal core and is conjugated as a typical Sumerian verb: **ne nu-mu-un-su-ub-be$_2$** "Should she not be kissed?" (Enki and Ninhursaĝa *passim*). Such verbs are fully nativized as Sumerian, even undergoing standard phonological changes when used in Emesal contexts (a variant dialect), **še—su-ub** for **ne—su-ub** (**še am$_3$-mi-ib$_2$-su-ub-be$_2$** "He will want to kiss" Enlil and Ninlil 20). The verb **šu—bal** has apparently been supplied with a convenient "folk etymology," literally "to change the hand;" the verb **a—ri** (***erû***) "to conceive" may be another such example, literally "to cast semen." Perhaps others could be identified, but have undergone processes such as metathesis or other phonological alterations. One possibility may be **pa—e$_3$** "to appear," regularly translated by forms of ***wapû*** (√*wpy*). We might speculate that **pa—e$_3$** could be a reflex of a loan without the initial /w/ (analogous to **ezem** < **wasim*) with the final weak of the Semitic root represented by Sumerian **e$_3$**.

Sumerian to Akkadian

According to Edzard's (2003, 178) survey of the 13 630 lemmas in the *CAD*, only 980 (about 7%) Akkadian words are considered loans from Sumerian.[3] As recognized by Michalowski (2006, 109), the relatively low number of loans is hardly indicative of extensive interference in the Akkadian lexicon. Although S. Lieberman's study of Sumerian loanwords in Akkadian is somewhat controversial, his comment that Akkadian did not borrow verbs from Sumerian is notable (Lieberman 1977, 14–15). In contrast, Sumerian seems to have borrowed any word class more readily.

Often, Sumerian loanwords are easily recognized, with minor and relatively predictable phonetic shifts between the languages and consonantal lengthening before the addition of a case ending, so Sum. **eš$_2$-dam** > Akk. ***aštammu*** "tavern; brothel", **dub-sar** > ***tupšarru*** "scribe", **barag** > ***parakku*** "dais, seat" although **barag** may in fact be a word loaned into Sumerian from Semitic and then loaned into Akkadian. One interesting loan is a Semitic word ****šaḫr*** "moon," borrowed into Sumerian as **u$_4$-sakar** (with an additional prefixed **u$_4$**), which is then borrowed into Akkadian as ***uzqāru***. The often-cited **e$_2$-gal** > ***ekallu*** "temple; palace" that appears in other Semitic languages with an initial glottal phoneme cannot be considered a straightforward Sumerian to Akkadian borrowing (Rubio 2016).

Some idiomatic formulations appear to have been borrowed from one language to the other, although the directionality is unclear. These may take the form of calques or identical, word-for-word constructs such as **ĝeštug$_2$—ĝar** = ***uznam šakānum*** "to pay attention" (lit. "to set the ear"), **a-šag$_4$—e$_3$** = ***eqlam šūṣûm*** "to rent a field" ("to bring out a field"), **šag$_4$-še$_3$—gid$_2$** = ***ana libbim šadādum*** "to consider carefully" ("to draw to the heart"), and many others. As C. Woods observes, such "literal loan translations of idioms are a regular aspect of bilingual communication" (Woods 2006, 104). These may be indicative of multilingual speakers in a shared cultural linguistic environment.

Phonology and Morphology

The reduction of Semitic gutturals from a set of five proto-Semitic phonemes to a reflex in a single phoneme (called alef by Assyriologists) in most Akkadian dialects (*GAG* §§23–24) is certainly influenced by Sumerian. Since Sumerian shows no reflex of these phonemes, it may be assumed that the loss of these gutturals in Akkadian is a result of contact-induced interference (Zólyomi 2011, 397–398).

Both languages use a bound morpheme acting as an adverbial, **-eš** in Sumerian and ***-iš*** in Akkadian. O. Pedersén (1989) had suggested that the Akkadian morpheme was borrowed from the Sumerian allative since the Akkadian also has a directive function; V. Meyer-Laurin (2012), however, has convincingly demonstrated the fallacies in the theory. Meyer-Laurin proposes instead that the use of the Sumerian adverbial **-eš** was borrowed from Akkadian or Semitic. The semantic and phonological similarity may be the result of some degree of leveling between the two languages or grammatical accommodation (Aikhenvald 2012).

Syntax

Change in word order is the most widely cited result of Sumerian–Akkadian contact, noted even in wider literature on language contact and change (Thomason and Kaufman 1988, 55; Thomason 2001, 89). The SOV syntax of Akkadian is regularly attributed to

influence from Sumerian. Such analysis is based on the predominant VSO syntax of West Semitic inscriptions and literary texts and, subsequently, the reconstruction of Proto-Semitic as VSO. Michalowski has suggested that the shared SOV of Sumerian and Akkadian could be an areal feature, common to several other ancient languages in the region (Michalowski 2006, 168–169).

Verbal System

Both languages evince a binary distribution with regard to viewpoint aspect. It would not be surprising if this commonality could be attributed to contact, but not necessarily solely Sumerian–Akkadian. Several other languages in the ancient Near East – including other Semitic languages – appear to share this characteristic, which suggests an areal typological feature (Streck 1998, 194).

Many consider the ventive to have developed in one or both languages as a result of contact (summarized in Edzard 2003, 175). This analysis naturally depends on recognizing a ventive in Sumerian grammar — a controversial conclusion. The correlation between the Akkadian ventive and a supposed Sumerian ventive relies extensively on data from grammatical paradigms; such data should be treated with skepticism.

Edzard and others have suggested that the modal system may also have been subjected to contact-induced leveling (Edzard 1973, 140–141). Zólyomi considers a functional leveling of the Akkadian asseverative particle ***lū*** and the modal prefix ***lu-*** a contact-induced effect analogous to the Sumerian modal prefix **he-** (Zólyomi 2011, 399–400). Edzard further regards the use of perfective conjugations as the base to express positive affirmation in both languages as another example of possible analogy-based change, since Akkadian's patterning more closely resembles Sumerian than it does other Semitic languages (see Edzard 2003, 177). Edzard's understanding of modality in Sumerian is based on an older concept (contrast Civil 2005), but his point remains suggestive.

Other Structures

Since Sumerian did not have a native conjunctive particle, it developed several strategies by analogy with Akkadian. Among them, Sumerian adopted the conjunction ***u*** from Akkadian. Civil has shown that this same particle seems to have become grammaticalized as a verbal proclitic, the so-called Sumerian modal prefix of anteriority (Civil 2008). OB Sumerian occasionally uses a verbal suffix or clitic **-ma** to express conjunction and other functions, clearly a direct borrowing from Akkadian. Like its Akkadian counterpart, it too can indicate "temporal succession, conditional, result, purpose, and contrast" (Deutscher 2009, 59; cf. Karahashi 2006).

Sumerian likely adapted aspects of its subordinate clause structure from Akkadian. The nouns $\mathbf{lu}_2$ and $\mathbf{ni\hat{g}}_2$ pragmatically function as relative clause particles at the beginning of subordinate clauses (Karahashi 2012). The usage was likely grammaticalized by analogy to Akkadian ***ša***.

The Sumerian equative **-gin** likely derived from a Semitic equivalent of Akkadian ***kīma*** (Michalowski, this volume) and analogously grammaticalized as a post-position (see alternatively Sövegjártó 2011). Its Semitic origins may explain why it is not referenced in the verb as are other Sumerian post-positions.

Final Remarks

Much of my discussion within the present contribution has focused on distinguishing Sumerian and Akkadian (Semitic) and, thereby, highlighting notions of language use and effects of language contact. I will close by reinforcing a suggestion that I have, to now, only mentioned peripherally. Perhaps our modern, analytical desire to categorize and classify features and structures as belonging primarily to one language or another is ill-fated. Sumerian and Akkadian (Semitic) are, throughout much of our material, intertwined and interconnected. Yes, the writing system could account for much of the opacity we encounter. I suggest, however, that we consider, alternatively, that the ancient writing communities may not have always viewed these languages so distinctly. Perhaps intense delineation between languages only became necessary when linguistic indexicalities compelled differentiation, possibly once Sumerian was no longer spoken (cf. Kraus 1970, 99). Certainly, the language users occasionally exhibit a keen awareness of the political or social power contained in using one language or another. Whether, however, at other times, users moved so freely into the interlingual space between the two languages that they created a new, mixed language that we can classify as neither Sumerian nor Akkadian – such a contact-induced alteration remains, at this time, beyond our comprehension.

NOTES

1 Thanks to Piotr Michalowski and Niek Veldhuis for reading drafts of this paper and providing many thoughtful criticisms and insights. All errors in fact or interpretation are mine alone. As a result of the nature of the present volume, which focuses on an overarching consideration of a complex topic, some speculations presented here are done so with little supporting evidence. Such suggestions require full deliberation and data that cannot be elaborated here. For grammatical overviews of Sumerian and Akkadian, see Michalowski and Hasselbach-Andee, respectively, in this volume.

2 Civil (2000, 108–109) interprets correct language (**eme si-sa$_2$**) as grammatically correct, rather than ethically, socially, or ideologically correct.

3 Edzard's count includes only seventeen volumes of the *CAD*; volumes P, T, Ṭ, and U/W had not yet been published. Based on my own unsystematic survey of these volumes, Edzard's percentage would not be dramatically altered.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Language Contact of Ancient Egyptian with Semitic and Other Near Eastern Languages

Thomas Schneider

Introduction

Language contact (Matras 2009) between ancient Egyptian and Near Eastern languages was an ubiquitous phenomenon. Egypt was at all times in direct or mediated contact with other linguistic areas (Grossmann and Richter 2015, 80), received significant numbers of immigrants, and during certain periods, controlled regions outside its state borders or was itself subject to foreign rule. The cohabitation of speakers of different languages in Egypt, the transfer of people, trade of objects, and exchange of ideas was accompanied by language contact and linguistic interference – reflected in the transcription of names, the borrowing of words, the translation of texts, the development of script systems, and the creation of interlanguages. Only a fraction of this interference is visible to us, due to the limitations of the preserved evidence and our inability to study actual communication. Three examples may serve to illustrate the situation:

1. The massive settlement of people from the Levant in the eastern Nile delta after 2000 BCE is almost exclusively known from the material culture at Auaris/Tell el-Daba that shows the hybridization of Egyptian and Levantine cultures. Without any doubt, this situation resulted in intense language contact, including bilingualism, code switching, lexical interference, and maybe a pidgin, mixed or "reduced language" (cf. Adams 2003, 93–105). This could be compared to the possible pidgin language used by the merchants of the Greek colony of Naukratis (Tovar 2010, 255), or a Nubian language variety of Egyptian influenced by a substrate language (Peust 1999). However, the evidence for linguistic contact at Auaris consists solely in Northwest Semitic names in conjunction with Egyptian titles and names on Second Intermediate Period artifacts.

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2. Evidence on language contact is more abundant in some periods (e.g. the Egyptian New Kingdom, 1550–1070 BCE) than others, a fact that does not necessarily mean more intense contact but also reflects the preservation of documents, and the emergence of new textual genres. For example, the ratio of foreign personal names attested for individuals living in Middle Kingdom vs. New Kingdom Egypt is c. 1:3 – not entirely dissimilar and pointing to a comparable degree of language contact. By contrast, the ratio of loanwords attested in Middle vs. New Kingdom sources is c. 1:100. The many New Kingdom terms are mostly preserved on papyri and ostraca, key source types of the Late Bronze Age, but even so present problems of factual assessment: e.g., terms relating to warfare and military equipment account for the largest portion (15%; Hoch 1994, 471), even though war literature and documents of the military administration have hardly been preserved. Closer inspection shows (Schneider 2008) that most of them are attested rarely, many just once. While they need not be cases of "nonce borrowing" (incidental borrowings practically equivalent with single-word code switches; cf. Zenner and Kristiansen 2013, 4; Winand 2017), they still illustrate the fact that all assessments are based on a small and coincidental set of data.
3. Information on languages involved in language contact can be deficient or missing; e.g. the secondary onomastic tradition in Egyptian documents of the Middle Bronze Age complements our knowledge of the Amurrite language that is itself reconstructed exclusively from personal names (Streck 2000; 2012; without the Egyptian evidence). Regarding lexical interference, it is also important to note that the languages possessed divergent phonological systems, and that they display much internal synchronic diversity and diachronic change.

Finally, a major obstacle to comparison is the continued use by most scholars of an ahistorical Egyptological transcription system that dates back to the late nineteenth century (Kammerzell 1998, 24) for all phases of the Egyptian language except for Demotic. For example, the discussion of Akkadian–Egyptian loanwords by Militarev (2007) is mostly flawed by mistaken phonological values.

Egyptian–Near Eastern Language Contact Until the Middle Bronze Age

Prehistory

In the fourth millennium BCE, the presence of Levantine immigrants in Egypt has been ascertained at sites of the *Lower Egyptian Culture* (Buto, Maadi); vice-versa, Egyptian presence in the Southern Levant is attested at En Besor (Mączyńska 2013; Anfinset 2010, 70). While cultural innovation from Southern Mesopotamia in art, craftsmanship, architecture and maybe writing is visible in Egypt before 3000 BCE – although not necessarily mediated through the presence of individuals from the Uruk civilization (Wilde and Behnert 2002) –, cases of linguistic interference have only rarely been discussed. One intriguing idea is to regard the Egyptian royal title *nsw* (New Kingdom pronunciation *insi*)

as a borrowing from Sumerian *ensi* "king" (Peust 2007). For the development of Archaic Egyptian, scholars have postulated the existence of different linguistic communities (Regulski 2016). Language contact has also been adduced for presumed lexical and grammatical parallels between ancient Egyptian and Indoeuropean (Egyptian stative vs. Indo–European medium-perfect), mediated either through a vanished substrate language or a Sprachbund situation (critical assessment by Zeidler 2004, Breyer 2010, 389–392). In this regard more likely is extensive language contact between Egyptian and African languages (Peust 2004).

The Early Bronze Age

Egyptian contact with speakers of Near Eastern languages is attested throughout the third millennium (Schneider 1998, 10–30). It is important to consider that the eastern Nile delta was populated by speakers of a Semitic language in the Early Bronze Age (for the case of Tell Ibrahim Awad, see Bietak 2010b). Sopdu, the patron god of the 20th Lower Egyptian province, continued to be portrayed as an Asiatic even when that province had become part of the Egyptian state. As late as the New Kingdom, the Ramesside capital city Piramesse in the Eastern delta was said to be "situated between Palestine and Egypt" (Pap. Anastasi II 1.2), "the outpost of every foreign country, hinterland of Egypt" (Fischer-Elfert 2016).

Beyond the border zone, Egyptian–Semitic language contact in the Old Kingdom is plausible through Egypt's activity on the Sinai and its political and commercial engagements in the Levant (Schneider 2015); probably Semitic-speaking prisoners from the Levant were brought to Egypt from the 5th dynasty to the First Intermediate Period. Warfare against Palestinian fortresses is depicted under Mentuhotep II (seen by Bietak 2010, 145 as evidence for Palestinian settlements in Egypt). The Lebanese port city of Byblos served as Egypt's gateway to Syria where knowledge of Egyptian and religious exchange is attested, e.g. by Egyptian inscriptions and the identification of the local "lady of Byblos" (an Astarte-type goddess) with the Egyptian Hathor (Zernecke 2013).

Language contact is reflected more directly in the transcription of foreign terms and names since earliest times (cf. a possible Semitic designation of a foreign chieftain in the 1st dynasty: Schneider 1998, 10). A developed transcription system is first attested in the 6th dynasty (Hoch 1994, 487) on execration texts from the Memphite royal residences that were directed against Nubian individuals (El-Sayed 2011, 73) and was probably also in use for Semitic and other Near Eastern languages. It allows for a detailed grapho-phonemic and grapho-morphematic analysis (El-Sayed 2011, 59–119) that shows Egyptian comprehension of foreign lexemes (cf. also Schneider 2000).

Depictions of sea-going ships from the reigns of Sahure and Unas depict translators who accompanied the Levantine and Egyptian crew members (Bietak 1988). There is little reason to doubt that Old Kingdom court was in diplomatic contact with political and trade centers in the Near East; the clay tablets from the 6th dynasty found at the Egyptian western oasis residence of Balat/Ayn Asil and inscribed in Hieratic may point to the knowledge of Cuneiform tablets in Egypt (Breyer 2010, 414 with fig. 55). Conversely, the similarity of signs of the undeciphered Byblos script with Egyptian Hieratic signs of the later Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period signals influence of Egyptian writing on

the development of a local script system (Hoch 1990). A series of "serpent spells" in the Pyramid Texts from the later Old Kingdom (spells 232–238, 281–282, 286–287) have been suggested to be Egyptian transcriptions of Northwest Semitic incantations (Steiner 2011). While the general context of linguistic interaction made such transfers certainly possible, the hypothesis uses post-Old Kingdom phonological values for the Egyptian signs and is thus unlikely (see also Breyer 2013).

Lexical transfer from Near Eastern languages is hardly attested during the Early Bronze Age. An example may be the Egyptian word for "horse" (*ssm.t*), arguably borrowed around 2100 BCE on account of its display of Akkadian mimation and an early rendering of Semitic Samek (Schneider 2008, 189).

The Middle Bronze Age

The Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period (c. 2000–1550 BCE) preserve us some evidence for direct Egyptian–Near Eastern language contact. Such contact that can also be deduced implicitly from the extent of Egypt's wide-ranging engagement with the Near East during the Middle Kingdom (cf. fragments of Amenemhet II's annals: Altenmüller 2015; biography of the vizier Khnumhotep: Allen 2008). Intense commercial and cultural contact can also be inferred from Levantine commodities in Egypt and vice-versa. The presence of Egyptian scarabs in the Levant and their emulation there and on Crete highlights the regional popularity of the amulet which was also a medium to disseminate Egyptian ideas; in turn, Levantine, Mesopotamian and Aegean motifs were transferred to Egypt.

Linguistic and scribal interaction is visible throughout the period. The early 12th dynasty Tale of Sinuhe features a fictional protagonist who rises in the Levant to the position of chieftain and controls trade and diplomatic travel. It mentions explicitly speakers of Egyptian as residents of the Levant, has the local sheikh who adopts Sinuhe into his family speak Egyptian, and implicitly credits Sinuhe with the acquisition of the local Semitic language when he establishes a family and builds his career. For Egyptian careers abroad, such as that of a priest of Sakhmet (Pap. Moskau Pushkin Museum 1695) or of a merchant to Byblos (Papyrus MMA 09.180.535; Parkinson 2002), language contact was inevitable, and mutual Egyptian–Semitic language competency indispensable. The biography of Khnumhotep renders communication between an Egyptian expedition leader and the ruler of Byblos, and mentions also speakers of Egyptian by using the term "Egyptians" with the classifier sign of the speaking man (Allen 2008). Egypt's Asiatic forecourt, the Sinai peninsula was the destination of mining expeditions, in which local personnel was employed and probably bilingual Levantine Egyptians were put in charge as expedition leaders (such as Ameni–Seshenu in Sinai Inscription 95). On his funerary stela (Cairo CG20765), a dignitary Hepetrehu in the early 12th dynasty boasts that he was able to "interpret the language of any foreign country" (Meyrat 2015, 322).

Large numbers of workers from the Levant, often with Semitic names, are attested at the major Middle Kingdom pyramid construction sites such as Illahun; they are also attested in private households (Schneider 2003, 59–61; Saretta 2016). The most prominent settlement of Levantines on Egyptian soil became, as of the 12th dynasty,

Auaris/Tell el-Daba. For this town alone, Manfred Bietak has estimated the number of Canaanite inhabitants during the eighteenth and seventeenth centuries at c. 30 000 people (Bietak 1988, 39). Northwest Semitic thus represented an imported minority language in Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period Egypt, creating within Egypt a situation of intense linguistic interference.

Middle Kingdom texts from official and private sources use a coherent sub-system of the hieroglyphic script to render foreign names and words, with matres lectionis after monoconsonantal signs for the rendering of the vowels /u/ and /i/ and the occasional use of CVC signs (Hoch 1994, 488–504). The most detailed use of this system is visible in the two series of 12th dynasty *Execration texts* which list the names of Levantine princes and their cities/territories (Wimmer 2010, 33–50). This onomasticon, together with c. 200 Semitic personal names from other sources (Schneider 1998, 35–46, 125–141; Schneider 2003, 112–176), constitutes an important secondary tradition for Northwest Semitic. Written communication with the Near East in Egyptian or Cuneiform very certainly existed; a fragment of a letter sent to the residence of the Hyksos (15th) dynasty at Auaris by one of the last kings of the First Dynasty of Babylon (Bietak 2010) shows that Middle Bronze Age correspondence from Mesopotamia to Egypt has simply not been preserved.

Conversely, at Egypt's trade emporium Byblos on the Lebanese coast, the local rulers adopted the Egyptian title "mayor" and appear to be Egyptianized; they used the hieroglyphic script for their official monuments in which their names appear in Egyptian transcription. We also see Egyptian Hieratic writing used at Byblos (the pseudo-hieroglyphic stela "L"; Hoch 1995, 65). Egyptian inscriptions also appear as legends on some seals from the Middle Bronze Age Levant. Noteworthy is one that transliterates the Sumerogram ÌR ^{d}A(a) according to the conventions of the Egyptian younger transcription system as *ỉr ʿ3* (Schneider 1998b, 186). On a different seal and an Egyptian royal scarab (Schneider 1998a, 128; Schneider 1998b, 186), we find the associative transcription of the Syrian god's name *Haddu* by Egyptian "Horus" ≈ /Ḫāruw/. The Egyptian writing systems seem to have prompted several attempts by speakers of Northwest Semitic to design a script system for their indigenous language (Rollston 2010, 11–14): the Byblos script (Hoch 1995), the Proto–Sinaitic script (most recently Morenz 2016), and the inscriptions found in the Wadi el-Hol (Darnell et al. 2005).

Despite this intense contact, and the assumed transfer of technological innovation to Egypt in the first half of the 2nd millennium BCE, lexical interference is rarely attested. Loanwords in Egyptian appear, e.g. in the terminology of weaponry, such as Northwest Semitic *'aṯbāt* "quiver" (Hoch 1994, 40f.) and maybe Hittite *widuli* > Egyptian *wrry.t* "chariot" (Schneider 1999, opposed Groddeck 2000). Other old loanwords may not be attested but can be indirectly postulated (e.g. precursors to Coptic *lakm(e)* "crumb" < Semitic [Arabic] *luqmat*; or tlo'k^{y}e/k^{y}lo'k^{y}e "ladder" < Semitic [Arabic] *daraǧat* "staircase"; Quack 2005, 312.321). In turn, Northwest Semitic arguably borrowed a word like (Hebrew) *dəyō* "ink" from Egyptian *ry.t* (Rössler 1966, 227; regular Middle Kingdom sound correspondence), as well as other terms related to scribal and sealing practices such as the precursors of Hebrew *ṭabbaʿat* and *ḥātôm* (< ḫātôm), "seal". The acquaintance with other languages is possible, cf. the possible Luwian title *ḫantawattis* "ruler" in the Tale of Sinuhe (most recently, Breyer 2010, 101–104; opposed Simon 2011).

The first half of the second millennium is marked by an enormous increase in the evidence about Near Easterners in Ancient Egypt who are attested throughout the whole socio-economic spectrum (Schneider 2003). The most prominent urban site for the interrelationship of Egypt and the Levant in the Middle Bronze Age is Auaris/Tell el-Daba, from the seventeenth to the mid-sixteenth century the capital of the Hyksos. Here the significant repeated settlement of immigrants from the Levant resulted in "cultural mixing" and a creolized culture; "born from Amorite practices within an Egyptian context" (Burke 2014, 368; Mourad 2015). The Hyksos themselves used Egyptian writing for governance and monumental display, much like the use of Akkadian by the Amurrite kings of Syria and Mesopotamia. On a scribal palette of the Hyksos Apapi, the king portrays himself as a model of erudition, instructed by the god of wisdom, Thoth, and the goddess of writing, Seshat (Morenz 1996, 159.163.167–170). The Hyksos, other contemporary rulers (cf. Flammini 2015) and dignitaries bore Amurrite personal names that may reveal a situation of bilingualism. The flourishing of Syrian cults (e.g., of Baal) at the site during this time makes it likely that we have to account for the use of Semitic mythical and ritual texts by the local priesthoods, as can be ascertained in the New Kingdom (Schneider 2012).

Late Bronze Age

The evidence for language contact between Egyptian and Near Eastern languages changes dramatically in the New Kingdom (1550–1070 BCE) – in terms of the available quantity and diversity of sources, the multitude of attested phenomena of interference, and the range of Near Eastern languages with which contact is attested. More richly documented is also the cultural context of language contact.

Lexical Transfer

Lexical transfer in the Egyptian New Kingdom (1550–1070 BCE) is the best-documented case for Egyptian–Near Eastern language contact. Loanwords are lexical units, but they are also cultural tokens, thus at the same time both a linguistic and historical source of information. In the linguistics of borrowing (for the following, Schneider 2004, 11–31), loanwords are classified with respect to the geographic place of borrowing (diatopic) and the social place of borrowing (diastratic), or rather, the socio-textual place, since social status, language use and textual production are closely intertwined. The situation is exacerbated by the phenomenon of diglossia from the Middle Kingdom to the late 18th dynasty (with a concomitant use of high register and vernacular Egyptian); and the presence of several Egyptian linguistic varities for different types of textual production side by side from the 19th dynasty on. A wide range of motivations facilitate borrowing, in particular onomasiology (lexical gaps), linguistic economy (more precise terminology), and reasons of communication (code switching, style and fashion, social and ideological motivations). The range of use of loanwords affect their phonological, morphological and semantic integration, e.g. the possible Second Intermediate Period loanword *wrry.t* "chariot" was fully integrated in Egyptian in the early New Kingdom and appears in stylistic variation with the newly borrowed Northwest Semitic *markabt* (Hoch 1994, 146).

In the Late Period, it assumes the meaning "wagon, cart (for transport)" und so enters into competition with the Semitic loanword ʿagālat > Coptic akʸolte "wagon, cart (for transport)" (Hoch 1994, 83).

In Egyptian New Kingdom texts, c. 350 loan words of probably or possibly Semitic origin are attested (Hoch 1994; Sivan/Cochavi-Rainey 1992; Winand 2017), and c. 300 loan words of likely non-Semitic provenance (Schneider 2004; for "African" loan words which are outside the remit of this chapter, see Zibelius-Chen 2011). It is important to notice that $^{2}/_{3}$ of them are from texts of the elite culture (wisdom texts, onomastica, religious texts, autobiographies, royal texts) and just $^{1}/_{3}$ from texts close to the vernacular (letters, judicial, business, fiction and lyric texts; Winand 2017). The notation of these words uses a specialized Egyptian transliteration system, "syllabic orthography" (after William F. Albright) or "group writing" (Hoch 1994, 498–502) that is equally used for the large body of foreign toponyms and personal names (Schneider 1992) but was also adopted for some genuinely Egyptian words (Winand 2017). As opposed to the older transliteration system that mainly used one-consonant signs, most hieroglyphs employed in the new system are old biliteral signs that are now used for CV sequences, and additionally, one-syllabic Egyptian words (such as *ḫe* "wood"; *pe "the"*) that could represent a foreign syllable (Hoch 1994, 498–502). The use of the two modes to differentiate loanwords of similar consonant sequence is visible in cases such as Egyptian *p-ṯ-i-r* < Hittite *pattar "basket"* and Egyptian *p-t3-rw* < Hurrian *pedari* "cattle") (Schneider 2004, 16).

One of the important corollary results of the analysis of loanwords is the information it provides on the donor languages. The majority of Semitic loanwords attested in the New Kingdom seem to be Northwest Semitic. However, according to Hoch, the inventory of phonemes visible in these borrowings seems rather reminiscent of the phonological situation in Aramaic and South Arabic. In consequence, a richer phoneme inventory than the short alphabet of 22 signs would suggest may need to be postulated for Phoenician and Hebrew (Hoch 1994, 479–486).

Within the Late Bronze Age Levant, Egyptians maintained a strong presence, and to judge by excavated cemeteries, some Egyptians may have settled permanently at the Egyptian military bases (Morris 2010, 826); an authentic recording of terms from speakers living in the Levant was therefore certainly possible. On the other hand, it is reasonable to assume that many of these terms were borrowed from native speakers of Semitic languages of different backgrounds within Egypt and that the existing evidentiary basis obscures a much more complex transfer situation. The borrowed vocabulary also contains, e.g., loans from Akkadian (like č-w-p-i-r "wagon, cart" < Akkadian *saparru*) and possibly other Semitic languages; the variation visible in the writing of some terms may be due to post-transfer integration.

To Semitic donor languages can be added non-Semitic ones from the Near East (for the following examples, Schneider 2004, 21.23), in particular Hittite (e.g., Egyptian *ḫ-b3-i-r* "business, trade" < Hittite heth. *ḫappar*; Egyptian *ḫ3-rw-p-w-s3-t* [a kind of pastry] < Hittite *ḫar(a)špau̯ante* "type of bread or cake made of meat or mushrooms") and Hurrian. In a description of the chariot we encounter an implicit translation of a Hurrian term: "their supports [Semitic ʿmd] are made of gold, their *ḫiaroḫḫe* [Hurrian: 'golden ones'] are of gold" (Schneider 2008, 184.189).

In terms of semantic categories, the largest group of terms is that of military language (cf. the detailed analysis by Schneider 2008 (111 terms in different subcategories)). Of these terms, only a very limited number (c. 3) are attested prior to the 18th dynasty (>1550 BC), 10% are attested since the 18th dynasty, and the majority in Ramesside times. In terms of the frequency of loanwords, hapax legomena account for more than 40% of the attested lexemes, words attested up to eight times account for 90% (Winand 2017). The most frequent terms in the New Kingdom are interestingly Hurrian words: the title *kuzine* "charioteer" (Hoch 1994, 341–345; with the Hurrian article *–ne*: Schneider 2008, 194) and the adjective *tl* "valiant" (if < Hurrian *adal*, Schneider 1999) with each more than 125 attestations. The number of attestations across different text genres is at least partially a reflection of the genuine diffusion of these words, as the 65 Semitic loan words from New Kingdom texts that have survived into Coptic are mostly such attested frequently in the New Kingdom (Winand 2017).

With regard to word classes, 83% of the attested Semitic loanwords are nouns, 16% verbs, and just 1% other word classes. One exceptional case from the latter group is the Northwest Semitic interrogative particle *ʾē-ḏæ* "which" (Hoch 1994, 43), used by the scribes as a stylistic device to display their erudition and give the text exotic flavor (Winand 2017). In the same way, the abundance of loanwords in specific texts such as the "Hymn to the King in His Chariot" were "for the ancient Egyptian scribe a way to craft poetry from exotica"; "just as the Egyptian armies conquered foreign lands, so did Egyptian poets use foreign words verbally to curb Egypt's foes" (Manassa 2013, 151. 153). Such an exemplary text of erudition from a military context is Pap. Anastasi I, 23, 2–7 (Schneider 2008, 198–202).

Only short texts exclusively in a foreign language and transcribed in the Egyptian script are known from New Kingdom Egypt (Helck 1971, 528–30; Quack 2009; Allon 2010). The few short Semitic texts preserved are (1) incantations in the London Medical Papyrus (Pap. BM EA 10059, Steiner 1992), (2) incantations in the Magical Papyrus Harris (pBM EA 10042; Schneider 1989) and (3) three lines on Ostracon CG 25759 from Deir el-Medineh (Shisha-Halevy 1978). In the London Medical Papyrus one spell is explicitly said to be an "incantation of the disease of the Asiatics in the language of Crete" (Lange 2007). It must be assumed that the Egyptian occupation of the Levant and Egypt's cultural influence also had a lexical impact on Northwest Semitic vocabulary (for proposed Egyptian words in the Ugaritic lexicon, see Watson 1999, 130). Semitic texts in Egyptian transcription show also a specific use of the Egyptian system of classifiers, including a metatextual function of the "speaking man" (Gardiner Sign List A2) and other determinatives to indicate the un-Egyptian linguistic origin of words (Allon 2010).

Bilingualism and Interpreting

While a comprehensive appreciation of linguistic interference between ancient Egyptian and Near Eastern languages in the Late Bronze Age escapes us, information on the extent of oral, written and scribal interaction can be gained from different types of evidence. Foreign linguistic communities are attested throughout Egypt (cf. Schneider 2010) so that bilingualism must have been a frequent phenomenon. The bearing of non-Egyptian personal names may indicate a non-Egyptian heritage, and possibly foreign language

proficiency. Among the Near Eastern personal names preserved for residents of Egypt in the New Kingdom, almost 80% can be explained as Semitic and 20% as of other provenance (Schneider 1992, 357). While the majority of the Semitic names can be classified as Northwest Semitic, a number of names are clearly Akkadian (Middle Assyrian; c. 2%) and some also possibly early North Arabic (c. 3%; Schneider 1992, 358; further developed by Israel 2006, 33–36). In some cases, Semitic personal names are attested in subsequent generations of a family or for both husband and wife, thus pointing to the presence of Semitic communication in a private context (Schneider 2006, 207). A certain presence of Hittite, Middle Babylonian and Hurrian within the Egyptian royal family is certain through the diplomatic marriages of Egyptian kings with Hittite, Babylonian and Mitanni princesses (Roth 2002) who moved to Egypt with their entourage and arguably, also literary texts for their personal perusal.

In the New Kingdom, the knowledge of the Semitic languages of the Levant seems to have been a prerequisite for higher military posts (as exemplified by the military handbook of Papyrus Anastasi I; Schneider 2008). In the Levant, Egyptian may have had the status of *lingua franca* (Helck 1971, 436). Interpreters of foreign languages are depicted on the reliefs from the Saqqara tomb of later king Horemheb (Martin 1989); under Merenptah, the high priest and former army scribe of the chariotry Onurismes declares in his funerary biography: "I spoke in the [appropriate] foreign language for any foreign language in attendance before my lord" (Meyrat 2015, 332). Interpreters proficient in Egyptian are also mentioned for foreign states (Babylonia, Cyprus; an Egyptian interpreter Ramose served for 13 years in Hittite diplomatic service). The fact that interpreters and translators are hardly ever explicitly mentioned in our texts is a case of *implicit communication* (Tarawneh 2011), testament to the ubiquitous use of language specialists and the presence of bilingualism. Royal envoys abroad (for Egyptian envoys in Cuneiform sources, see Helck 1971, 437–442) were accompanied by interpreters, and specialized interpretation can be assumed for the Egyptian physicians at the Hittite court and other occasions of cultural and technological exchange (Breyer 2010, 247–307), such as the Hittite specialists working in Piramesse.

Interference in Texts: Interlanguage and Translation

The Amarna letters from c. 1350 BCE and the correspondence between the Ramesside and Hittite royal courts from the reign of Ramses II attest to the existence of scribes trained in corresponding in Akkadian, Hittite, Hurrian, Canaanite and other languages of the Near East (for the training in Cuneiform, see Mynářová 2015). Important literary texts from abroad were used for scribal and cultural instruction and one tablet (EA368) represents an Egyptian–Akkadian vocabulary (Tarawneh 2011, 276; Meyrat 2015, 326). The presence of a "gloss marker" in these texts to gloss Akkadian words and logograms by Canaanite terms must have supported the writing or the translation process (Tarawneh 2011, 277). The Egyptians also knew as early as the 18th dynasty of the two Semitic alphabet sequences (Schneider 2018).

Phenomena of linguistic interference between the native Egyptian language of the scribes and the normative Akkadian language of diplomacy are attested in two groups of texts: (1) the mid-fourteenth century letters dispatched from Egypt (ten found at Amarna;

two at Egypt's administrative center Kumidi/Kamid el-Lōz in Lebanon) and the copies of literary texts, syllabaries and wordlists from Amarna, and (2) c. 100 texts (mostly letters, but also two versions of the Egyptian–Hittite peace treaty) from the first half of the thirteenth century. Matthias Müller has defined this „Akkadian from Egypt" as an interlanguage with a number of linguistic peculiarities that could be explained by the situation in Egyptian (see the detailed studies by Müller 2010; Müller 2015).

The translation of Near Eastern texts into Egyptian (Schneider 2011) is attested for the Egyptian version of the Egypto–Hittite peace treaty where the term *mỉty* "copy" likely means "translation" (Meyrat 2015, 330ff.). In the case of the Egyptian description of the Hittite royal seal of the peace treaty, translation is explicitly described ("What is written in the middle of this silver tablet on its other side: a representation … accompanied by a legend of this meaning"). An intriguing case of the translation of divine terms (including the translation of Cuneiform determinatives) is the list of Hittite witness deities (Mouton and van den Hoven 2015).

In the New Kingdom, Near Eastern mythological texts were adapted for Egyptian purposes rather than outright translated; nevertheless, through loanwords in the Late Egyptian texts, the transfer process is apparent. The Egyptian "Myth of the Battle of the Weathergod with the Sea" must probably be seen in the context of the installation of Seth-Baal as a new patron of Egyptian kingship at the transition from the 18th to the 19th dynasty (Schneider 2011–12). Thematically closest to the myth is the Hurrian–Hittite text KBo XXVI 105; the Egyptian version not only contains the first attestations of the divine names Teššob and Yam (the latter became the regular Egyptian word for "sea"), but also new lexical terms –e.g., *š3q3*, "cupbearer" (< akk. šāqû, ugar. šqy, aram. šāqyā), in a sentence that recalls the scene from Ugarit (KTU 1.2 i 21-26) where the gods knuckle under to Yam when threatened (Schneider 2003, 613 n. 30). An Ugaritic text (KTU 1.12) may also have been the source of the second part of the "Tale of the Two Brothers" (Pap. BM 10183). This text also contains possible calques between Ugaritic and Egyptian (Egyptian *ḥ3wti nfr*, "perfect fighter" < Ugaritic *aliy qrdm*; Egyptian *m wnw.t bỉn.t*, "in the worst moment" < Ugaritic *b adn adnm*; Schneider 2008, 318). These texts are just examples of a much richer tradition of Near Eastern religious texts adopted into Egyptian (e.g., Silverman and Houser Wegner 2007) of which only small portions are preserved.

The Iron Age

The Near East at the end of the Bronze Age witnessed significant changes in the political, demographic and linguistic geography of the Near East. Ancient Egypt lost its province of Palestine–Syria and for 250 years, did not wage any wars in the area, which reduced the extent of regional language contact. Regional statehood proliferated across Palestine, Syria, and Anatolia, a system of governance eliminated by the Neo-Assyrians's imperial rule which was in turn continued by the Neo-Babylonians and Persians. The linguistic situation across the Near East was complex; most important in this respect was the expansion of the Aramaeans since the eleventh century (Lipiński 2000), leading to the adoption of Aramaic as a *lingua franca* from the Neo-Assyrian period on. This meant in Egypt itself a continuous situation of bilingualism for everyday and business use (Demotic Egyptian

and Aramaic), and multilingualism in the case of many individuals and communities (Vittmann 2003; Winnicki 2009; for Elephantine, Botta 2009, 8; for the interesting case of the supplementary "Nubian" chapters of the Book of the Dead, see Wüthrich 2015).

Lexical transfer is visible between Egyptian and several Semitic languages. A limited number of terms were borrowed into Hebrew (Muchiki 1999, 236–258; Arnet 2014), mostly for items that are Egyptian in nature, e.g. terms of commodities (e.g., *nætær* "natron"; *šēš* "linen", *tēvā* "box; ark", *qæsæt* "scribal equipment") and technical terms (the units of volume *ʾêfā, hîn*), plants (*šiṭṭāh* "akacia" [also lent to Akkadian], *šûšān* "lotus") and elements of Egypt's riverine environment (*ʾî* "island, coast"; *yᵉʾōr* "Nile", *ṣî* "ship"). Rarer are other terms, e.g. religious ones (such as *ḥarṭōm* "magician, diviner"). Conversely, as Egyptian loans from Hebrew from before the Persian Period (but not yet attested in the New Kingdom) have been suggested (Quack 2005) terms like *ebyēn* "miserable, poor" < *ʾæbyōn*, *lhōv* "smoke" < *lahav* "flame", *hmot* "grace, gift" < *ḥæmæd* (< *ḥamd*), *kᵛlēb* "muzzle [device]" < *kᵉlūb* "basket", or *kᵛamūl* "camel" < *gāmāl*. There exists little evidence about Northwest Semitic language communities other than Aramaic ones (for Phoenicians, Vittmann 2003, 44–83; for a Phoenician graffito in Middle Egypt: Vittmann 2011, 301)

A similar semantic situation as with Egyptian loans into Hebrew applies to the Egyptian loans into Egyptian Aramaic (Muraoka and Porten 1997, 352f.; Folmer 2011, 595), the administrative language of Egypt under Persian rule. From 46 attested loanwords, 13 are terms for ships or parts of ships, 9 terms for buildings/building materials, 5 are religious terms found on funerary stelae, and the rest covers commodities, legal and economic terms and titles, and the flora. Some of them (e.g. the religious term *nmʿty* = Egyptian *n3 m3ʿ. tyw* "the vindicated" are attested just once and could rather be examples of code-switching). In one text, the phrase "wall of *hanpāna*" (a Persian term, "protection") is glossed by an Egyptian term in Aramaic transcription, *tmw'nty = t3 my.t ntr* "the way of the god".

Aramaic loanwords in Egyptian before the Persian period can only rarely be ascertained (e.g. *kelōl* "vessel"; *mankᵛale* "hoe") but become more frequent later (Quack 2005). Starting in the late sixth to early fifth century BCE (spell from the Wadi Hammamat: Steiner 2001), we have numerous Aramaic texts written in Demotic script, most famously Papyrus Amherst 63 from probably the fourth century BCE (Vittmann 2003, 84–119; Quack 2010, 83ff. with the older literature). In the fifth to fourth centuries BCE, the Jewish community at Elephantine is the best-documented case of an Aramaic language group on Egyptian soil (see Vittmann 2003, 84–119; Joisten-Pruschke 2008; Botta 2009). There are also few Akkadian loanwords in Egyptian that may date to the Neo-Assyrian period (such as *matekᵛte* "army" < Akkadian *madaqtu* "army camp", Quack 2005, 314; for Akkadian names in Aramaic sources from Egypt, see Porten, Zadok and Pearce 2016). Through the deportation of Egyptians as a consequence of the Assyrian conquest of Egypt, Egyptian language communities are also attested in Mesopotamia (for the Assyrian renderings of Egyptian names, see the PNA 1–3, 1998–2011).

It is likely that language contact between Egyptian and Old North Arabic dialects as well as Old South Arabic existed (for the documentation of people originating from Arabia, see Vittmann 2003, 180–193; Winnicki 2009, 294–362); although the most visible testimony for this is only the Minaean inscription on the merchant Zayd'il's coffin, from Ptolemaic times (Swiggers 1995; Robin 2015, 117).

Attested as mercenaries since the early 26th dynasty (around 650 BCE), the Carians are a particularly interesting case of an Anatolian language group living in Egypt. They left us c. 200 documents from Egypt between the 7th and the 4th century BCE, in particular bilingual or better "digraphic" stelae from Saqqara with Carian script and Egyptian iconography (Vittmann 2003, 155–179; Popko 2008, 103–108).

Despite the two Persian periods of overlordship in Egypt (Vittmann 2003, 120–154), Persian terms in ancient Egyptian documents are rare; from the 14 attesteted words, only three occur before the Graeco–Roman period (27th dynasty: *wsjpwtr= vis(a)puθra* "king's son", *Mdj = māda* "Mede, soldier" and the title *qppš;* Vittmann 2004, 168; cf. there also for the attempts to translate the Persian royal titulary into Egyptian). On the stelae erected along the precursor of the Suez Canal by Dareios I, four languages were put on official display side by side (Persian, Elamite, Babylonian and Egyptian; Briant 2000). An alabaster cosmetic bottle at Yale shows the titulary and name of Xerxes at the same time in hieroglyphic Egyptian as well as Cuneiform Old Persian, Elamite, and Akkadian, but also exhibits a Demotic label indicating the volume of the vessel (Ritner 1996; a comparable jar with the names of Darius I in the Bible Lands Museum, Jerusalem). Apart from the three writing systems and five languages it displays, the bottle preserves in its Demotic label also the first attestation of the volume unit *kpḏ*, a loan word of unknown, maybe Iranian, origin (Vittmann 2004, 136f.), adopted by the manufacturer for an Egyptian type of vessel. This demonstrates, in one object, not only the linguistic diversity of Persian period Egypt but also, the interface of language contact and Egyptian life.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Hebrew and Aramaic in Contact

Aaron Koller

Introduction: Divergence

Canaanite and Aramaic diverged at some point prior to the middle of the second millennium BCE. Distinctively Canaanite features are evident in Amarna Canaanite and in Late Egyptian transcriptions of Canaanite words (Hoch 1994); the split may have been as early as the mid-third millennium BCE (Steiner 2011). Although both Canaanite and Aramaic developed distinctive features (see Pat-El and Wilson-Wright 2016, and Huehnergard 1995, respectively), of course only one branch had to develop innovative features to effect the split; Canaanite seems to have broken off first from the proto-language, and the distinctive features of Aramaic then developed over the course of the second millennium.

Despite this ancient rift, languages of the two families lived in close proximity for millennia. This chapter will set aside most of the Canaanite languages, such as Phoenician, and concentrate on Hebrew and its relationship with Aramaic. Over the course of the first millennium BCE and into the first millennium CE, mutual influences can be seen in the texts composed in Hebrew and Aramaic.

Because the two languages are both fairly closely related and were in contact for many centuries, it is often difficult to discern what is a shared inheritance and what is a borrowing in one language from the other (see Pat-El 2013, 317 for this methodological problem).

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Contact in Pre-History

We speak of influence between dialects as if we had "pure" examples of each and could then observe "contamination." Such is rarely, if ever, the case, however.

In fact, there are a number of linguistic features that unite Hebrew and Aramaic, even as opposed to other Canaanite languages. Anson Rainey (2007a, 53–55; 2007b) revitalized this question by drawing attention to a number of features in Hebrew that are shared by Aramaic but not the other Canaanite dialects. The most glaring of these is the use of the prefix preterite (*yaqtul*) for a string of clauses connected by the conjunction in order to express a "sequence of action" in Hebrew, Moabite, and Old Aramaic, but not elsewhere (Emerton 1994; 1997; Muraoka 1995; 1998; Sasson 1997; Muraoka and Rogland 1998; DeCaen 2001). This may be Hebrew influence on certain Old and later Aramaic texts (Zakkur, Dan, Deir 'Alla, and P. Amherst 63), but it clearly is a feature that was not in the common ancestor of either the Canaanite or Aramaic dialects.

There are also a number of striking lexical isoglosses which unite Hebrew and Aramaic against Phoenician (and Ugaritic). The most basic is perhaps the use of the root *hwy* "to be" in Aramaic, Moabite, and Hebrew, against *kwn* in Phoenician and Amarna Canaanite, but the data also include the standard words for "foot", "good", "ox", to put", and "to make" (Kogan 2015, 372).

Rainey never makes it explicit what precisely he meant to propose, but the most parsimonious way of dealing with the data he adduced is to assert that although genetically Hebrew is a Canaanite language, through close contact with Aramaic *at an early stage*, the two languages developed in tandem certain usages that are not shared by other dialects.[1] In other words, there was profound influence between the two languages at a stage early enough to affect the basic grammar of the two languages, presumably no later than the Late Bronze Age.

More profound evidence for contact comes from areal features that are innovations of the late second millennium and are found in both Hebrew and Aramaic. The fundamental place that these features hold in the grammars of both languages make these highly significant. These indicate that Hebrew and Aramaic were in close contact for the centuries of their pre-history, when we do not have direct documentation of either dialect.[2] The definite article, which has a different morphology in each language but identical syntax, is clearly an areal feature (Huehnergard 2005, 81–82). The markers of direct objects *ʾt* in Hebrew, *ʾyt* and later *yt* in Aramaic) appears to be another (Rubin 2005, 94–105; Koller 2011, 207–211). Kutscher suggested that אית was in its origins Canaanite, and competed with "native" Aramaic *l-* as a marker of direct objects (Kutscher 1971, 114; compare also Wilson-Wright 2016). The use of the infinitive absolute plus finite verb construction is also worthy of further study in this light: it is attested in Sefire III 2, and possibly elsewhere in that text, and is common in Ugaritic and BH and attested in Phoenician (Kaufman 1985, 50; Morrow 2001; note that it is not the *morphology* of the infinitive absolute that is at issue here, but the *syntax*.)

In sum, there is strong evidence for intensive contact between Hebrew and Aramaic in the period prior to either language being attested in texts, at some point in the second millennium BCE. We turn now to contacts in historically attested periods, beginning with the Iron Age.

Iron Age Contacts

When we turn to the Iron Age, Hebrew and Aramaic are both attested in large numbers of texts, but in very different corpora. Hebrew is primarily found in the Bible, which contains literary texts originating over the course of a millennium and which were subject to centuries of editorial work and scribal transmission after their composition. The early stages of Aramaic, on the other hand, are far less extensive, and are primarily found in royal inscriptions, and later in letters, contracts, and other quotidian documents, whose dates can generally be established with some certainty, and which were not copied or even seen in the following millennia.

Avi Hurvitz (1968; 2003) has articulated some intuitive methodological strictures regarding the import of Aramaisms within Biblical Hebrew. In the earlier periods, there are examples of contact with Aramaic that appear to be more motivated more by aesthetic concerns than by natural linguistic processes (see Malamat 1958 for relevant political context). These examples are lexical only, and are found in poetic texts, where the need for variety is more pronounced (Sáenz-Badillos 1993, 60–62; see Boyd and Hardy 2015 for another suggested Aramaism in poetry). It is sometimes said that Archaic Hebrew may simply have looked more like Aramaic than later Hebrew (Bar-Asher 2015).

Thus, one reads in Deut 33:2 that "the Lord arrived from Sinai, shining forth from Se'ir; He appeared from Mt. Paran and came (*wə-'ātāʰ*) from Ribebot Qodesh." The use of the root *'–t–y*, the common root in Aramaic for "to come" is motivated by the need of the poet to deploy four other verbs of motion to describe YHWH's path from the south (see Cross 1998), in conjunction with the fact that the poet is describing the deity's motion from a foreign country. This root was clearly known within Hebrew-speaking circles, though: it appears another 20 times in the Hebrew part of the Bible.

A more difficult example is the appearance in the Song of Deborah (Judges 5) of the verb *m-ḥ-q* in v. 26: "She struck Sisera, she crushed (*māḥăqāʰ*) his head, she crushed (*māḥăṣāʰ*) and pierced his temple"). *māḥăqāʰ* seems to be another form of the Hebrew word *māḥăṣāʰ* used in the following clause, with a different realization of emphatic fricative lateral. Whereas in Hebrew this phoneme merged with /ṣ/, in Aramaic this phoneme went through a number of changes. In Iron Age Aramaic texts, it was apparently realized as something like /kx'/ (Steiner 1991), and was written as <q>. It later merged with /ʕ/, and later scribes began writing the phoneme with <ʕ>. Thus the cognate of Hebrew *'ereṣ* was written *'rq* in Old Aramaic but *'rʕ* in later Aramaic. (Compare Jer 10:11, and TAD B 2.2, lines 14–16, both of which show the two spellings side-by-side.) Thus, the cognate of Hebrew *mḥṣ* would have been written *mḥqh* in Old Aramaic. For this reason, Gzella (2015, 99–101) identifies this word as showing Aramaic influence in an early Hebrew text. However, this particular word is attested in Old Aramaic itself (Zakkur) as *mḥ'*, with an ad hoc shift of /kx'/ to /ʔ/. It is also not clear if the word would have been borrowed orally, and Hebrew scribes happened to come to the same solution of how to write the phoneme /kx'/ as the Aramaic scribes, or if it was transmitted in writing.

Similarly, the words *yətannū* and *lətannōt* appear in the Song of Deborah (Judges 5:11; 11:40). This word seems to derive from a root **t̲ny*; since the phoneme /t̲/ merged with /š/ in Hebrew but with /t/ in most of Aramaic, many have seen this as an Aramaizing or

Aramaic usage in an early Hebrew text (see already b. Baba Batra 8a; Morag 1983–1984, 503; Morag 1983, 53–54). Again, this becomes complicated once one looks at the details. In Old Aramaic, */t̲/* was still pronounced [t̲], and written with a <š>. So if the word was borrowed in the Iron Age from Aramaic, we have to assume that the Hebrew scribes simply thought that the /t/ was the closest consonant to the foreign sound they were trying to transcribe, [t̲], even though the Aramaic scribes chose <š> for this purpose (and the scribes at Tell Fakharya chose <s> for this purpose; see Stadel, this volume). It cannot be proposed that in the dialect of the Song of Deborah */t̲/* had merged with /t/, or was consistently written with <t>, because there are a number of counter-examples in the text (e.g. *šə'ārīm*).

Outside of poetry, Aramaic-like words are found in biblical texts set in Aram, or otherwise associated with an Aramean context. The Aramean Laban "overtakes" Jacob, and the narrative says, *wa-yadbēq 'otō be-har ha-gil'ād* (Gen 31:23), using the root *d-b-q* as opposed to the expected *hiśśīg* (a verb in fact found in v. 25 there). J. C. Greenfield (1981, 129–130) drew attention to this and other examples (see also Kaufman 1985); many more examples, some more compelling than others, have been proposed (see Rendsburg 2015a for a summary and further references). This indicates that Hebrew authors were familiar enough with Aramaic to deploy words or grammatical features when the literary context demanded it.

On the Aramaic side, one finds the root *lḥm* "to war", which may be a loanword from Canaanite, in the inscription from Tel Dan, on the Israelite border (see Stadel, this volume). Deir 'Alla also shows a combination of Aramaic and Canaanite features. Among the most striking Aramaic features is the use of <q> for the emphatic fricative lateral (see above); among the prominent Canaanite features are the *nif'al* verbal stem. One possible interpretation (Pat-El and Wilson-Wright 2016) of the messy data is that this is a Canaanite text with features borrowed from Aramaic; another possibility is that it is a text that was originally written in Canaanite that was then translated into Aramaic (Gzella 2015, 87–91). Yet another view is that Deir 'Alla represents a non-Aramaic non-Canaanite dialect of Northwest Semitic. Most likely is that this is a dialect of Aramaic that has borrowed many Canaanite features (Halpern 1987); phonological features are the most compelling for dialectal diagnosis, as words and even verbal forms may be more easily borrowed across dialectal lines.

In the later Iron Age, the impact of Aramaic on Hebrew began to grow more pronounced and more profound, as the use of Aramaic spread beyond the borders of the Aramean homeland. In the story of the Rabshaqeh at the wall of Jerusalem (2 Kings 18 = Isaiah 36), the Judean dignitaries request that the Assyrian diplomats speak to them in Aramaic, rather than in "Judean" (= Hebrew), the implication being that at that time in Jerusalem, *only* diplomats and perhaps other high-ranking government officials would be expected to be able to converse in Aramaic (against the doubts of Boyd and Hardy 2015, 44 n. 28).

By the following century, Aramaic had spread deeper in society. An Aramaic sentence is found in the mouth of Jeremiah (10:11; see discussion in Mizrahi 2014). There are numerous Akkadian loanwords in the Hebrew of Ezekiel, who worked in the area of Babylonia in the early sixth century (for a catalog, see Gluska 2005), and it is likely that these were transmitted to the Jews in exile through the medium of Aramaic.

Persian Period

In the Persian Empire, Aramaic served as the language of international communication, not only on the highest diplomatic levels, but also among mid-level diplomats and, it seems, among at least some communities. Aramaic during this period was an international language, utilized by the Persian administration and as a language of law and literature, from central Asia through northeast Africa. The bulk of the corpus available is from texts found in Egypt, and coincidentally, many of these texts were written by Jews who lived in the town of Elephantine in southern Egypt in the fifth century (for a grammar, see Muraoka and Porten 2003, and see Stadel, this volume). Hebrew influence is evident in Elephantine Aramaic in a small number of loanwords that make their appearance in the corpus, such as *ʿdh*, *tkwnh*, *khny'*, *mzrqy'*, and *špṭ* (Greenfield and Naveh 1985, 117–118).

Generally, Aramaic had a more profound impact on Hebrew than the other way around. The status of Hebrew as a spoken language during the Persian period is, unfortunately, less than clear (see Sanders, this volume, for discussion and references). It seems clear that the language was under threat; Nehemiah complains that the children of the people he encountered in fifth-century Jerusalem "half spoke Ashdodite and could not speak Judean" (13:24; see Polak 2006 with references).

The Hebrew biblical texts composed in this period show clear and consistent influence of Aramaic (Sáenz-Badillos 1993, 121–129; Greenfield and Naveh 1985, 120). Most obviously, there are multiple chapters in the books of Daniel and Ezra that are in Aramaic. In Ezra this originates as the quotation of official documents from the Persian bureaucracy (on the structure and eastern dialectal affiliation of these texts, see Steiner 2001, 638–641), but in Daniel the language choice is motivated apparently only by the naturalness of telling Jewish diaspora stories in Aramaic (see below). Furthermore, the Hebrew of these texts, too, contains many loanwords from Aramaic, as well as loanwords from other languages, such as Akkadian and Persian, which were likely mediated through Aramaic (contra Wilson-Wright 2015). A feature as pervasive in everyday life as the names of the months was borrowed by Hebrew speakers from Aramaic in this time, and the borrowed month names (e.g. Nisan, Iyyar, etc.) are in use in Jewish circles since that time.

Such influence reflects extensive and intensive cultural contacts, and indeed the effects of this contact is evident in the realm of literature, as well, as seen in different ways in the stories of Tobit and Ahiqar, Daniel, Enoch, P. Amherst 63, and Job (Lemaire 1985). Linguistically, the influence of Aramaic was indeed profound. Talshir (2003) showed that it was not merely the passage of time that created the differences between Iron Age and Persian period Hebrew (often called Late Biblical Hebrew [LBH]), but the intensive linguistic contact with Aramaic in the Babylonian exile and the subsequent movement of people from the exile to Yehud. Thus, although within the grammar of LBH, the legacies of classical Hebrew and the vernacular dialect of Hebrew are stronger than the overt influence of Aramaic (Polzin 1976, 61–69), the Aramaic influence was pervasive if subtle (Pat-El 2012, 254–259). To take one example of the sort of effects that are visible, the classical relative particle *ʾăšer* is replaced in LBH by *kī*, under the influence of Aramaic *dy*, and many other calques are visible, as well (Greenfield and Naveh 1985, 120–121).[3]

Cook (2016) has argued that Mishnaic Hebrew is the result of interference from native Aramaic speakers (see below), and it is worth considering LBH in this light, as well.

Some books, although written in Hebrew, contain so many Aramaic-like features that scholars have sometimes wondered whether the texts were not in fact written originally in Aramaic and then translated (see Ibn Ezra on Job 2:12; Rashi on Job 36:2). The Hebrew of Qohelet is certainly distinctive, and shows heavy Aramaic influence (for example, Pat-El 2013, 318–321; see also Pat-El 2012, 254–259), and H. L. Ginsberg (1950) argued that the book was originally Aramaic. Although later literature was in fact translated from Aramaic to Hebrew and vice versa (see on Enoch, below), there is no real evidence for the Aramaic influence being any more than interference from Aramaic speakers on Hebrew.

It should also be observed that "Late Biblical Hebrew" is likely not actually a single dialect; linguistic differences can be detected between the texts composed in the province of Yehud, such as Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles, and those composed in the eastern Diaspora, such as Esther and Daniel – and this despite the fact that the people Ezra and Nehemiah were themselves products of the eastern Diaspora. Furthermore, it is important to note that not all of the developments visible in Late Biblical Hebrew were continued in later dialects (Koller 2012, 270); thus, there must have been areas in which Hebrew was spoken in a form other than that visible to us in LBH. An ostracon from the City of David, dated to the fourth century, reads *kkrn 1 lp lḥnnyh bṣq*. Since *bṣq* and *kkr* are Hebrew, not Aramaic (which uses *lyš* for "dough" and *pt* or *ṭwlm* for "loaf"), this has been said to be a Hebrew ostracon (Naveh 2000, 9–10, against Kottsieper 2007, 112–113). But the ending on the plural noun is /n/, as in Aramaic, against Hebrew /m/, and this has been said to reflect Aramaic influence (Schniedewind 2006, 143). Another view is that in both Hebrew and Aramaic, the difference between word final /m/ and /n/ was neutralized in fourth-century Jerusalem Hebrew, as in other dialects (Koller 2017). When we describe the influence of Aramaic on Hebrew in this period, then, we must be conscious (as always) of the fact that we have access to only one of the versions of Hebrew that was spoken and written during this era.

Hellenistic and Roman Periods

The early Hellenistic period provides us with little evidence for influence of Aramaic on Hebrew or vice versa, since we have very little data with which to work. This period may have seen, however, translations of works from one language to another. Sections of the book of Enoch (in particular the Book of Watchers and the Astronomical Book) were composed in Aramaic no later than the third century BCE and circulated in Jewish Palestine. Tobit, too, was likely originally written in Aramaic, perhaps around the same time or slightly later, and copies of that book in both Hebrew and Aramaic have been found at Qumran (Fitzmyer 1995; Cook 1996). It is likely that the Aramaic stories of Daniel were transmitted to Palestine in this era; the stories were supplemented with a Hebrew introduction (chapter 1) and, probably later, further Hebrew visionary texts (Daniel 8–12), producing a bilingual book.

At Qumran, the majority of the texts are in Hebrew, and there is good reason to think that the sect wrote their own literature in Hebrew exclusively (Dimant 2007; Ben-Dov

2009). This was apparently motivated by an ideology of linguistic purism (Segert 1963; Schniedewind 1999; Weitzman 1999), according to which Hebrew, the language of God and of Creation, would be the only appropriate language in the messianic future or in the utopian Qumran present (so 4Q464 according to Stone and Eshel 1992). The Aramaic texts from the site, therefore, are believed to have been inherited from the broader Jewish Second Temple intellectual life (Bernstein and Koller 2012, 190–191).

Despite the linguistic ideology of the sect, their Hebrew is suffused with Aramaic influences, even when they are copying earlier Hebrew texts, such as biblical books. Kutscher's magisterial study of the Great Isaiah Scroll showed Aramaic influence on every level of the language, and he devoted a chapter to documenting the influences (1959, 141–163). Qimron (1986, 116) argued that Kutscher may have exaggerated the extent of the influence of Aramaic, but concludes that "the fact that Aramaic has succeeded in penetrating even the morphology proves how far reaching its impact was" (see also Greenfield 1995). The Aramaisms in the Hebrew Dead Sea Scrolls have more recently been studied systematically by Fassberg (2015). It is not clear if there are statistically significant differences between the biblical texts and the original sectarian texts, so the data here are drawn from the entire Qumran Hebrew corpus. In the realm of orthography, the word *mōznayim* "scales" is spelled *mwznym* rather than the usual Hebrew spelling *m'znym*, and final *–ā* is often spelled with <'> instead of <h> (e.g. *hy'* "it was" [MMT]; *htwr'* "the law" [1QSa 1:1]).

Phonologically, there is pre-nasalization or dissimilation in forms such as *yntn* for *ytn* (4Q17 2 ii 14; 4Q175 3) and *tnṣwr* "you will keep" (4Q436 2 i 4), among others (Fassberg 2015, 10–11); this feature is not known elsewhere in Hebrew, but is widespread in Aramaic (Garr 2007). Morphological influences tend to be reflective of the most intensive language contact, and there is Aramaic influence evident in QH morphology, as well. In the verb, the 3fp perfect form *whzyqh*, rather than *whzyqw* (and two other examples of this feature), seems to be Aramaizing. The 3ms suffix on plural nouns sometimes appears as *–why*, e.g. *'lwhy* in Pesher Habakkuk, *ydwhy* in the Great Isaiah Scroll, and *rglwhy* in 1QS, among others, and also reflects Aramaic grammar (see, somewhat differently, Fassberg 2015, 24).

The area of the lexicon is perhaps the most interesting. There are numerous calques, including function words such as *l'ḥt* "very," modeled on Aramaic *lḥd'*, *mšktwb* "from what is written," modeled on *mdktyb*, *krṣwnw* "according to his will," modeled on *kr'wtyh*, *btmyd* "always," modeled on *btdyr'* (Qimon 1986, 116). The forms of Hebrew words were also remodeled on the basis of Aramaic: segolate nouns are found in the Aramaic pattern rather than the Hebrew one, such as *bswr* instead of *boser*; the plural of *ywm* appears often as *ywmy(m)* rather than *ymy(m)*; the preposition *tḥt* is attested as *tḥwt*. But actual loanwords are very rare. One of the few is *klyl* "crown," but this is found in biblical Hebrew texts from the early sixth century BCE (Lamentations 2:15 and Ezek 16:14, 27:3, and 28:12), where it has been taken as an Aramaism in BH (Wagner 1966, 64–65; Dobbs-Allsopp 1999, 26–27; differently Tawil 2006, 37–40). The authors and scribes apparently consciously tried to avoid Aramaic loanwords, and by and large did manage to do so to a surprising extent (Rendsburg 2011; Rendsburg 2015b, 156–157). There are, of course, some, such as *srk* and *rz* (which was originally Persian but mediated through Aramaic); the last word in Nahum 3:9 is cited in 4Q385-6 2: 6–7 as *bs'dk* "with your

help," rather than MT *bʿzrtk*, substituting the Aramaic root for its Hebrew counterpart (Joosten 2010, 358). Overall, the influence on Aramaic is widespread, except for the vocabulary.

Philologists often point out that the lexicon is the realm most easily affected by language contact, and therefore the first to show influence from other languages. Qumran Hebrew shows a somewhat inverse corollary: linguistic purists such as the Qumran scribes have a relatively easy time purging their language of real loanwords. The more subtle influences of another language are much more difficult for native speakers to perceive, and therefore to prevent. Qumran Hebrew shows influence from Aramaic on all levels of the language – with the major exception being the lexicon, which was kept relatively "pure."

In the other direction, the Aramaic Dead Sea Scrolls show significant Hebrew influence, too (Fassberg 1992; Stadel 2008; Joosten 2010, 366–367). There are loanwords such as *ʾl ʿlywn* and *hll* "to praise" in the Genesis Apocryphon, and many other words (*ḥms* "violence," *ʾyl* "ram," *yswd* "foundation," and *ʿwr* "blind") appear throughout the corpus. The verb *wywšʿ* "he saved" is attested in one text; the root *yšʿ* is unattested in Aramaic, suggesting that this is a Hebraism (Fassberg 1992, 67). These Hebraisms appear to be from the Bible, rather than from spoken Hebrew, and so reflect literary rather than colloquial influence (Stadel 2008, 131–133). This, coupled with the profound influence of (spoken) Aramaic on the Hebrew of Qumran, may reveal that Hebrew was *exclusively* a literary language there (Steiner 1997, 146; contra Rendsburg 2011, 218–219; see Joosten 2010, 355–356 for discussion).

On the other hand, the texts from Judea from the Great Revolt (67–70 CE) and the period of Bar Koseba (132–136 CE), reveal that Hebrew was a spoken language (this is a very old question; among recent scholars this is with Mor 2016, contra Gzella 2011), but also that it was a language that had been deeply influenced by Aramaic (Kutscher 1962; Mor 2011; Gzella 2007a, 2007b). On the phonological level, we find pre-nasalization/dissimilation reflected in *ḥnṭyn* "wheat" (Murabbaʿat 24:2). In the lexicon, there are hybrid forms such as *mzbnwt* "sales," a Hebrew pattern built of an Aramaic root, and note the widespread use of *ʾyln* for "tree", rather than BH עץ, which shows that the semantic structure of the language was profoundly affected by Aramaic (Kogut 2007; Koller forthcoming). In syntax, the construction *bšl š-* "in order that," appears to be modeled on Aramaic *bdyl dy* (Murabbaʿat 46:7). The word order of contracts written in Hebrew "blindly follows" the structure of Aramaic contracts (Mor 2009, 251), despite the normal differences between Hebrew and Aramaic in this regard. Hebrew letters, on the other hand, reflect native Hebrew word order.

The Aramaic texts of Bar Koseba show limited but noticeable Hebrew influence. This includes technical terms, such as *šbt* "Sabbath" (rather than *šbḥ*), *hnsy* "the prince," with the Hebrew definite article, in the official title of Bar Koseba himself, and *mḥnh* "army camp." There is also the repeated use of the conditional particle *ʾm* "if," rather than *hn*, which elsewhere in Aramaic appears only in Targum Onqelos (Kutscher 1961), apparently revealing the influence of spoken Hebrew in the Aramaic texts.

One fascinating text is a deed of sale dated to 134 CE, right in the middle of the Bar Koseba revolt, from Kefar Baru, apparently on the eastern shores of the Dead Sea, which is a double document – a legal document in which one copy of the text is rolled up and

sealed to prevent forgery, and the other is written on the outside, for easy visibility. This interior text is written in Aramaic, which even in those nationalistic days was still the more common language of the law, but on the outside we read a (fragmentary) Hebrew text, including the phrase *tḥdr šptwḥ* "the room that is open," corresponding to *twnh d ptyḥ* in the inside text (Broshi and Qimron 1986).

The Roman-era texts just discussed – the Bar Koseba texts and the Kefar Baru deed – along with other texts not discussed in detail all fundamentally keep the two languages separate. There may be Hebrew influence in the Aramaic and Aramaic influence in the Hebrew, but it is evident at any given time what language the text is in. This is not the case for the very intriguing document from Beit ʻAmar. This text reads, in part: *btryn ʻśr lksylw šnt ʾrbʻ lḥrbn byt yśrʾl…mwdh ʾny lk hymh hzh bkwlmʾ šʾlyh lk ʻl yd šʾwl ʾlyk šʾlyh bʻly qwdm kk…mytwk htqblt…wkl ʾdm šʾywhb ršty lydk*…. The form *šʾywhb* seems to be from the Aramaic root *yhb*, in a Hebrew qal participle form; in *htqblt*, the verbal stem may be Hebrew, but the verbal ending Aramaic; and *hymh* may show both the Hebrew and Aramaic definite articles on the noun. There are other quirks, as well, such as the spelling *šʾ-* (pronunciation uncertain) for the relative particle and the phrase *lʻmt kk* (Bar-Asher 2014a; Eshel, Eshel, and Yardeni 2011; Fraade 2011; Gross 2012; Fassberg 2017). This text reflects, among other things, a reality in which a scribe may be fluent in speaking Hebrew, but be trained only in writing Aramaic. When called upon to write a document in Hebrew, presumably for nationalistic reasons – note the date, "fourth year to the destruction of the House of Israel," apparently after the fall of Bar Koseba – he struggles to write with any fluency.

Indeed, it can be argued that Roman-era Hebrew and Aramaic formed a Sprachbund in the area around the Dead Sea. As opposed to what is found in Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic, Mishnaic Hebrew and most other dialects of Aramaic, *hitpaʻel* verbs from roots with initial sibilants do *not* show the expected metathesis of the infixed *-t-* and the first root letter in Qumran Hebrew, the Yadin papyri, the Bar Koseba letters, and Nabatean Aramaic (Folmer 2003, 241; Koller 2011, 203–204; Fassberg 2012). Thus, we find forms such as *htšdr* (P. Yadin 53:3), *ytškḥ* (P. Yadin 54:10), and others in the Great Isaiah Scroll and Hodayot. According to Fassberg (2012, 32), the form is explicable within Aramaic, and the Hebrew forms are the result of Aramaic influence (possibly orthographic, rather than phonological influence). This feature is only found in these dialects, within 50 miles of each other, pointing to the tight connection between the dialects of Hebrew and Aramaic (Jewish and Nabatean) spoken in the region.

Early Rabbinic Literature

Mishnaic Hebrew (MH) is the language of the literature of the Tannaim, the rabbis whose era ended in the early third century. Named for the Mishna, the central literary work from the period, MH was thought by many in the nineteenth century to be an artificial language like medieval Latin – used for written composition, and perhaps learned conversation, among the scholastic elites, but not anyone's native language. This view was contested by M.Z. Segal (1908, 1927) in the early twentieth century, and especially since the discovery of the Bar Koseba texts, the view that MH was a spoken dialect at some point has been

the dominant one (for orientation, see Fassberg 2012; for a recent survey with copious bibliography, see Ong 2015, 32–53). There is no doubt, however, that it was profoundly affected by Aramaic (Bar-Asher 2014b, 250–251; Pérez Fernández 1997, 5–6; for a maximalist catalogue of Aramaic lexical influences, see Gluska 1987, 122–1282), which was also spoken, and presumably more often spoken by the Jews of Roman Palestine. Cook (2016) argues that MH is a dialect born of native speakers of Aramaic learning Hebrew as adults, probably following the Hasmonean conquests in the first century BCE. Others argue that the dialect has roots much earlier (Koller 2017), but the two approaches may in fact be complementary.

The influence is sometimes obvious to the eye, such as loanwords, but the more interesting signs of influence are more subtle. In the realm of morphology, the 2ms pronominal suffix in BH was *–ək̲ā*, and *–ak̲* in pause, but in MH *–ak̲* is the standard form. The specifics of this development and the environments in which it is found point to internal Hebrew changes, but there is no doubt that these were helped along by Aramaic, where *–āk̲* had long been the form (Steiner 1979, with references). The 2fs, too, shifted to *–īk̲*, again on the pattern of Aramaic. This is a good example of the types of effect Aramaic had on MH: features that were rare in earlier Hebrew are promoted to more prominent status within the later strata of the language under the influence of Aramaic. These are not elements foreign to Hebrew, then, and yet they are an effect of Aramaic.

The gender of certain words changed between BH and MH, apparently again under the influence of Aramaic. For example, *kōs* was feminine in BH, but is masculine in MH, as is Aramaic *kās* with the same meaning, and BH *śādeh* is masculine, but MH *śādeh* is feminine, presumably because Aramaic *ḥql* "field" is feminine (Bar-Asher 2014, 251–252). Also in the realm of syntax, the common reciprocal constructions in BH are *ʾīš ʾet rēʿēhū* or *ʾīš ʾet ʾaḥīw*, but in MH reciprocals are usually expressed as *zeʰ ʾet zeʰ* or *zeʰ la-zeʰ*. This, too, seems to be Aramaic influence; compare *wə-ʾarkubbatēh dā lə-dā nāqšān* (Daniel 5:6) and *wə-lā leheˇwōn dāvəqin dənāʰ ʿīm dənāʰ* (Daniel 2:43) (Bar-Asher Siegal 2012).

In the realm of the lexicon, besides loanwords, deeper effects are found as well. The word *ʾḥz* developed the meaning "to close," alongside "to grasp," under the influence of the Aramaic cognate *ʾḥd*, and there are many other similar calques (Bar-Asher 2014b, 251). The semantic structure of words and of semantic fields was reorganized because of Aramaic, as well. Thus, BH *bwʾ* meant both "to arrive" and "to enter," but under the influence of the contrast between *ʿl* and *ʾty*, MH distinguished between *nkns* and *bwʾ* (Koller 2013).

It should be noted that the same Rabbis, when they formulated the liturgy, apparently made a conscious effort to keep all foreign influences, including Aramaic, out of the formulations (Bar-Asher 2007). In all of the liturgical formulae known to us, Bar-Asher found only two foreign words, and neither of these was Aramaic: the Latin *lgywnwt*, used in a technical sense to refer to the Roman legions in the blessing said on the ninth of Av in commemorating the destruction of the Temple, and *mprns*, from Greek, "to support," apparently because it was felt to be Hebrew (Bar-Asher 2016, 33–35). According to Bar-Asher, this linguistic feature is a reflex of a linguistic ideology that privileged Hebrew – and biblical Hebrew – above all else when it came to prayers to God. As Bar-Asher notes, there is explicit mention of this ideology in the Talmud, which reports: "Rav Judah said: A person should never request their needs in Aramaic; R. Yoḥanan said: Anyone who requests

their needs in Aramaic, the ministering angels do not help them, because the ministering angels do not know Aramaic" (b. Shabbat 12a; b. Soṭah 33a).

NOTES

1 Hackett and Pat-El 2010 offer a rebuttal of Rainey's view that is uncharitable in the extreme, even granting that they thought he would be alive when it was published. They correctly note (as Rainey did not) the evidence for the Canaanite affiliation of Hebrew, but then over eight pages go on to systematically misconstrue, or at least construe uncharitably, Rainey's arguments. For example, Rainey never actually wrote that Transjordanian is a branch of the NWS tree, but that the language was brought in from the Transjordan, and Rainey's point seems to exactly be that הוי is an innovation whereas כון is a retention, so listing other languages that use כון only proves the point; he also did not assert that אשר על הבית is bad grammar in Hebrew, but that the term is not the native Canaanite one for administrator (that would be סכן), and that *in that function* it was calqued from Akkadian. Further discussion would be out of place here; see also the criticism of both the substance and the tone of Hackett and Pat-El's article in Kogan (2015, 369-375).

2 It should also be noted that Hebrew did not participate in a sound change – the merger of *ś*, *š*, and *ṯ* – that took place not only in Phoenician, but in Lachish Canaanite of the thirteenth century BCE; see Steiner 2016, 108*.

3 Ian Young and his colleagues have argued in recent years that Aramaisms cannot be used to date biblical texts (Young, Rezetko, and Ehrensvärd 2008, 1.220–221). We will not discuss this issue here, beyond noting that their suggestions have been rightly rejected by numerous researchers on well-founded methodological grounds. See, for example Pat-El 2012, 247–248.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Multilingualism and Diglossia in the Ancient Near East

Rebecca Hasselbach-Andee

Introduction

It has long been noticed by linguists, anthropologists, and sociologists that bi- or multilingualism is not, as usually perceived by many people who grew up in Western countries such as the US and many European countries, a minority phenomenon but rather a daily necessity for the majority of the world's population (Romaine 2003, 512; Schendl 2014, 521). In the majority of today's countries, bilingualism or even multilingualism is an essential part of how the society and speech communities function. These multilingual societies arise through various factors, such as trade, marriage, education, and political or religious reasons. As true as it is for today's countries and societies that the use of two or more languages represents the majority situation, the same can be said about ancient societies. Human communities have always been in contact with each other (Romaine 2003, 513–514), which has led to evidence of language contact and bi- or multilingualism from the earliest attestations that we have for human language in writing.

A few words need to be said about bi- and multilingualism and the problems faced when investigating these features in ancient societies before turning to examples from the Ancient Near East. "Bilingualism" generally means the alternate use of and proficiency in two languages (Langslow 2002, 26; Weinreich 1968, 1), while "multilingualism" refers to the use of more than two languages or linguistic varieties. In this article, the term "multilingualism" is preferred over "bilingualism" because it is less restrictive regarding the number of languages concerned and allows for more flexibility in describing multilingual societies. "Proficiency" has been variously defined and is often understood as the ability to speak different languages with the same degree of fluency, although some scholars also simply consider less than native-speaker fluency in both languages as sufficient for calling

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an individual bi- or multilingual. It has to be noted, however, that in reality, multilingual individuals are hardly ever equally fluent in the languages they know. This is due to the fact that individuals or certain population groups in situations in which multilingualism is widespread, hardly ever use the same languages for the same functions (Romaine 2003, 512). It is often the case that a language or language register is only appropriate for certain situations, such as the use of one language among family and friends, while another is used in education, for formal purposes such as dealings with the government, at the work place, or for religious purposes. Language choice in multilinguals is thus not arbitrary but is determined by social factors (Romaine 2003, 517). Given the functional differentiation between the linguistic varieties spoken by a multilingual, the individual will be more fluent in a given variety according to the domains for which the language is used, while using a variety in an unusual domain can lead to interference, that is, influence from the variety that is usually used for that domain (Romaine 2003, 525). For example, an individual who is accustomed to speak one language at home and with friends but uses another language at work, might experience interference such as including specialized vocabulary from the latter language when speaking about his or her work in the language more commonly used for the communication with family and friends. Consequently, proficiency most commonly does not mean equal fluency in two or more languages, but rather proficiency in each language in certain domains of use, that is, different situational contexts.

When the choice which language to use in specific situations becomes institutionalized at the societal level, we speak of "diglossia" (Romaine 2003, 519). The concept of diglossia was first introduced by C. Ferguson (Ferguson 1959; see also Ferguson 1991). Ferguson defined diglossia as a special sociolinguistic situation in which two varieties of the same language are used for different functions (Ferguson 1959, 325). The functional domains of each variety, which Ferguson calls H = High variety and L = Low variety based on their prestige, are divided into L being used for informal situations, such as among family and friends, for informal conversations, and folk literature, while H is used for formal situations such as education and the government, in writing, the news, etc. Important to note is also that L in these situations is the native language of each speaker while H has to be formally learned. Lastly, L is commonly not written and has no standard variant, while H is the language of a significant body of literature and thus has a written standard (Ferguson 1959, 329-331). Examples given by Ferguson include Arabic, Modern Greek, and the language situation in Switzerland.

Ferguson's definition of diglossia has subsequently been broadened to include situations in which two or more different languages instead of varieties of the same language show an institutionalized functional distribution (see especially Fishman 1967). Today, scholars use various definitions of the term diglossia. Some adhere to the stricter definition given by Ferguson, while others apply the term to any situation in which two or more linguistic varieties are used for different domains. The different approaches taken with regard to the definition of the term are one reason why there is often no consensus regarding whether or not a given situation should be interpreted as diglossic. Varying definitions of the term can also be observed in the discussions of linguistic situations in the Ancient Near East, as will be shown further below, where they equally lead to rather different interpretations of the data.

Besides these general issues regarding the definition of certain terms, another problem faced when dealing with the question of multilingualism and diglossia in ancient societies in particular is the lack of data. As everybody working on ancient or dead languages knows, we are limited to the evidence that has been preserved in written form with regard to what we can say about the language or languages used. This differs greatly from modern situations where linguists have access to spoken varieties and are able to observe the choice of language and the extralinguistic reasons for a switch in language or language register. For ancient languages it is important to be aware that we are lacking this direct evidence and to carefully distinguish between written and spoken multilingualism.

Written records do not tell us how people actually spoke, they only tell us how they wrote and what type of standards they used in writing (Versteegh 2002, 57). Similarly, linguistic changes reflected in writing, which can be either historical changes or changes within language registers, only provide us with insights concerning the attitudes of a respective speech community or author towards the grammar and style that was deemed acceptable in writing, and not necessarily with evidence of changes in the spoken form of the language. In other words, the linguistic changes witnessed in writing do not necessarily reflect changes that occurred in the spoken language at the same time. It is well known that it can take quite some time before a linguistic change in the spoken language becomes acceptable for the written standard (Versteegh 2002, 59, 66). Similarly, attempts at language maintenance can obscure the actual influence of one language on another in its written form. The problem with written evidence is thus that there is a danger of overrating the evidentiary value of written texts in terms of spoken language use and to assume that it represents how people actually spoke or how spoken language developed. Because of these restrictions in the available data, we have to be aware that what we can trace with our evidence primarily reflects written multilingualism in the Ancient Near East and we have to keep in mind that the spoken reality might have been rather different. The actual speech situations can, if at all, only be deduced by indirect evidence such as occasional mistakes, slips of the pen, hypercorrections, loanwords, etc. (Versteegh 2002, 53).

Lastly, we often lack knowledge about the circumstances of the attested texts, that is, their sociolinguistic background. In many cases, it is difficult to determine why an author used one language over another or switched between languages since the extralinguistic information on social parameters that determine language use is lacking (Schendl 2014, 526).

Multilingualism in the Ancient Near East

With these preliminary remarks in mind, it is possible to turn to the evidence for multilingualism and diglossia in Ancient Near Eastern societies. There is plenty of evidence that ancient societies were similar to modern ones in that multilingualism rather than monolingualism was more common, if not the norm. We know that Ancient Near Eastern peoples and cultures were in contact with each other continuously based on archaeological and textual evidence for trade connections, migrations, and contact between adjacent political entities and cultures.

Written evidence throughout the Ancient Near East provides us with plenty of information about multilingual societies and/or population groups, including, for example, the at

least bilingual contact between Akkadian and Sumerian in Mesopotamia, the co-existence of various languages such as Hittite, Hurrian, Luwian, and Hattic, among others, in Anatolia – texts in each of these languages were found in the capital of the Hittite empire Hattuša (see also chapter 12) –, the multilingual situation that has been discovered in Ugarit, where texts in several languages, including Ugaritic, Akkadian, Sumerian, Hittite, Hurrian, and Egyptian were found (Pardee 2004, 289), the close contact between Hebrew and Aramaic in the Levant starting during the Biblical period and lasting until the death of Hebrew as a spoken language in the first two centuries of the common era (see also chap. 23), the close contact of Akkadian and Aramaic that ultimately led to language shift, that is, the replacement of Akkadian by Aramaic as a spoken language, and the multilingual situation in Greco–Roman Egypt, where Greek, Egyptian (Coptic and Demotic), and, to a certain degree, Latin are attested in writing, with other minor languages including Nubian, Carian, and Aramaic (see e.g. Fewster 2002, 224), to name just a few. These examples, although they are far from being comprehensive, are nevertheless representative and show the complexity of Ancient Near Eastern societies from a linguistic point of view. We have to keep in mind, however, that all the aforementioned examples point towards written multilingualism and do not necessarily indicate that the spoken reality was the same.

In the following, this contribution will look at some of the evidence for multilingualism in the Ancient Near East in more detail:

Multilingualism in Mesopotamia

In Mesopotamia, multiculturalism and with it multilingualism was the norm. The openness of Mesopotamia in terms of cultural diversity has, besides common factors such as migrations, two main reasons: first, the large lowland basin of the Tigris-Euphrates river valley has no geographic borders, that is, no barriers such as high mountains or the like that hinder access, and second, Mesopotamia is poor in natural resources, which is a fact that favors economic, political, and cultural contacts with peoples and societies outside of Mesopotamia (Galter 1995, 25). Because of this situation, two or more languages were spoken in Mesopotamia during most of the historical periods that we can trace. In the following, this article will first look at the multilingual situation of the third and early second millennium BCE, which primarily concerns the use of Sumerian and Akkadian, and then turn to the situation attested in the first millennium BCE, which provides evidence for Akkadian and Aramaic bilingualism.

Sumerian and Akkadian

Sumerian and Akkadian bilingualism goes back at least to the early third millennium BCE. When exactly the contact between the two languages started is unknown since it is uncertain when Semitic speaking people migrated into Mesopotamia. Although there is no direct evidence from the early to mid-third millennium BCE for Akkadian in the form of texts, it is clear that there was a Semitic speaking presence that was in close contact with Sumerian speakers in southern Mesopotamia since unilingual Sumerian texts that were composed in Fara and Abu Salabikh during the Early Dynastic III period often contain scribal names that are of Semitic origin (see e.g. Biggs 1967, 104, 57; Krebernik 1998, 265).

Furthermore, at the time when monolingual Akkadian texts start to be written, around 2350 BCE, the changes in the language that can be attributed to Sumerian influence are already completed or at least have started to appear, such as the change in word order from VSO to SOV (completed), the loss of the five typical Semitic guttural phonemes /ʾ/, /h/, /ḥ/, /ʿ/, /ġ/ (in progress), the presence of Sumerian loanwords in Akkadian and vice versa, etc. (see e.g. Zólyomi 2011, 397). The presence of these interference phenomena from Sumerian in the earliest written Akkadian texts indicates that the contact between the two languages, and thus bilingualism involving the two, must have started considerably earlier than the appearance of the first fully written Akkadian texts.

As in many other cases of ancient languages, there is no direct evidence how this bilingualism was realized in practice. We do know that in the first half of the third millennium BCE, Sumerian was the language used for writing, for example for administrative purposes, given that all economic and administrative transactions were recorded in Sumerian, and that it was the language of cultural prestige. Akkadian, at this early stage, was not used for writing, at least not explicitly, as far as we can tell. What percentage of the population of Mesopotamia were native speakers of Sumerian or Akkadian – was the majority of the Akkadian-speaking population bilingual or just a small educated part? – and how the interaction between the two languages happened, that is, among which population groups, is impossible to know. Scholars such as Galter (1995) and Vanstiphout (1999) have nevertheless tried to draw some conclusions about how this early bilingualism was realized based on comparisons with peripheral cultures such as Ebla. In particular, they have looked at the existence, or lack thereof, of certain types of text genres, including bilingual lexical lists and bilingual texts, and noted that the earliest bilingual lexical lists do not originate in Mesopotamia proper but were found at Ebla. It further seems that the first true bilingual texts likewise come from Ebla (Vanstiphout 1999, 147). The Ebla material dates to approximately 2370–2320 BCE, while the first real Akkadian-Sumerian bilingual texts from Mesopotamia start to appear around 1900 BCE (Vanstiphout 1999, 148; see also chapter 21), after Sumerian declined as a spoken language. There is further evidence that the earliest attestations for professional "translators" between Akkadian and Sumerian appear during the Sargonic period, when, for the first time, Akkadian was used as an administrative language (Vanstiphout 1999, 147). The question is why the attested types of text genres differ in Ebla and Mesopotamia proper. Galter and Vanstiphout have suggested that the degree of bilingualism and proficiency in the respective languages (Akkadian and Sumerian in Mesopotamia, Eblaite and Sumerian at Ebla) differed. Both of them assume that the extent of bilingualism in Mesopotamia, at least among the scribal elite during Early Dynastic times, made translations from one language into the other unnecessary (Vanstiphout 1999, 151; Galter 1995, 27). In other words, native Akkadian-speaking scribes learned Sumerian and Sumerian writing in the same way as Sumerians and were equally proficient in both Akkadian and Sumerian. In Ebla, however, Sumerian was a foreign language and thus tools such as bilingual lexical lists and texts were created for teaching purposes (Galter 1995, 27). Only with the rise of Akkadian as the predominantly spoken and then written language and the decline of Sumerian in Mesopotamia, which led to the ultimate demise of Sumerian as a spoken language, was it felt necessary to create similar devices in Mesopotamia. Although this idea requires further proof, it provides an interesting explanation for the chronological difference in the

emergence of genres such as bi- or multilingual lexical lists and bilingual texts in Mesopotamia proper and its western periphery. If Galter and Vanstiphout are correct, the initial bilingualism in Mesopotamia of at least the scribal elite must have exhibited near equal proficiency in both languages. Only with the loss of Sumerian as a spoken language and language of administration did this proficiency decline in favor of Akkadian, so that Sumerian had to be studied as a foreign language with the help of certain educational tools, as was the case in Ebla centuries earlier.

Based on the evidence presented above it thus seems that at least the scribes who were native speakers of Akkadian were highly proficient in Sumerian as well and were able to switch easily from one language to the other, making translations unnecessary. Whether this high proficiency of native Akkadian speakers permeated the majority of the Akkadian language community or not is difficult to assess since there are no sources that address the issue. It is likely, however, that some larger part of the Akkadian language community had at least some knowledge of Sumerian because of the significant influence that Sumerian had on Akkadian. As mentioned above, the loss of the typical Semitic guttural phonemes /ʾ/, /h/, /ḫ/, /ʿ/, and /ġ/ are usually attributed to Sumerian influence. The typical Semitic word order VSO, which is still attested in some early Akkadian names, changed to SOV, also under Sumerian influence. Some morphemes such as the ventive ending *–am* might have changed their function based on parallel morphemes in Sumerian. Last not least, there is a significant amount of Sumerian loanwords in Akkadian. Changes such as these, especially the structural changes that pervaded all dialects of Akkadian, can hardly be explained by solely originating in scribal schools. They are easier explained based on larger groups of native Akkadian speakers that were proficient, at least to a certain degree, in Sumerian as well. It is thus likely that, besides scribes, at least local elites and maybe even some parts of the general population had proficiency in both Akkadian and Sumerian. It is more difficult to determine the degree of proficiency of native Sumerian speakers in Akkadian. Sumerian has a number of Akkadian loanwords, but it is not as easy to identify comparable structural changes based on contact with Akkadian as they are found in the latter (see also chapter 21). It could thus be speculated that initially the attested bilingualism was stronger in one direction, native Akkadian speakers adopting Sumerian, than the other way round. This situation changed, however, when Akkadian became the major spoken and written language of Mesopotamia starting during the Sargonic period. With the rise of Akkadian, Sumerian speakers adopted Akkadian as their main language with the result that Sumerian died out as a spoken language around the late third/early second millennium BCE.

The Second Millennium BCE

The linguistic situation in Mesopotamia continued to change after the end of the third millennium BCE. The ongoing changes were caused by several factors, including migrations and political and economic contacts. At the beginning of the second millennium BCE, multiple languages were written and spoken in southern Mesopotamia, including Sumerian (as literary language), Akkadian, Hurrian, Elamite, and Amorite (Crisostomo 2015, 162). In the second half of the second millennium BCE, Kassite was added to the mix while Amorite disappeared. There is no evidence to what degree Amorite was spoken in

Mesopotamia during the first half of the second millennium BCE since there are no texts in this language and it hardly left any traces in Akkadian itself. It seems, therefore, that the Amorite population quickly assimilated into the existing Mesopotamian culture and gave up their own language within a few generations. A similar situation is attested with regard to Kassite, which entered Mesopotamia during the Middle Babylonian period (approximately 1500–1000 BCE) and equally left hardly any traces in the written sources.

Regarding Sumerian and Akkadian, Akkadian, as mentioned before, had become the primary spoken language in Mesopotamia and was also used for all types of writing, while Sumerian was restricted to certain literary genres such as magical incantations, liturgy, a few specific administrative documents, and education – in fact scribal education was always conducted in Sumerian (Crisostomo 2015, 162).

In the late second millennium and early first millennium BCE, Aramaic speakers began to migrate into Mesopotamia and brought their language with them. The bilingual situation between Akkadian and Aramaic during the first millennium BCE will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

Akkadian and Aramaic

During the first millennium BCE, Arameans increasingly started to enter Mesopotamia and to have contact with Assyria and Babylonia. The migrations were in part voluntary, that is, they followed the pattern witnessed in previous migrations into Mesopotamia involving groups such as Akkadian speakers and Amorites, and in part they were forced. When the Neo Assyrian Empire expanded westward, its policies included the resettlement of conquered population groups, resulting in the resettlement of Aramaic speakers from conquered Aramean kingdoms into Assyria (Pitard 1994, 213, 227). Furthermore, the relative open borders of Assyria promoted trade and other forms of contact with neighboring cultures, which equally brought it into direct contact with speakers of Aramaic. Due to these circumstances, we can witness a growing number of West Semitic, including Aramaic names, among the personal names attested in the Mesopotamian textual material from the beginning of the first millennium BCE on (Tadmor 1987, 449; Gzella 2015, 107). The use of Aramaic in Mesopotamia continuously increased during the first few centuries of the first millennium BCE. The exact process of the spread of Aramaic and the reasons why it became the predominant language in both Assyria and Babylonia are yet unknown. One theory is that the presumed large amount of Aramaic speakers that were resettled into Assyria and that were assimilated into Assyrian society had a major influence on the local Assyrian population in linguistic terms. In addition, Aramaic was the most widely used language west of Assyria due to the presence of numerous Aramaean states in northern Mesopotamia, Syria and even eastern Anatolia, and was thus used as the diplomatic language between Assyria and its western vassals (Tadmor 1987, 449, 451–452; Pitard 1994. 227; for a general overview see also Niehr 2014).

The reason why it is so difficult to trace the spread of Aramaic is that Aramaic was written on perishable material so that only very few documents and written attestations of its use are preserved. What we can deduct with relative certainty from the attested material, is that Aramaic had become the second administrative language of Assyria by the eight to seventh centuries BCE and that by the sixth century BCE, the Neo Babylonian royal

administration was most likely bilingual (Beaulieu 2013, 359). Evidence for the use of Aramaic comes from both written and other sources. Depictions of Aramaic scribes writing on parchment versus Akkadian scribes writing on tablets are known from Neo Assyrian reliefs starting with Tiglath-Pileser III (744–727 BCE). From the textual point of view, Neo Assyrian documents mention Aramaic scribes. Furthermore, a few texts in Aramaic are preserved from both the Neo Assyrian and Neo Babylonian periods. These written sources include a bilingual Assyrian – Aramaic inscription dating to the second half of the ninth century BCE that has been found in Tell Fekheriye and that shows the use of both languages side by side (see e.g. Sasson 1985). Cuneiform tablets sometimes contain Aramaic clay epigraphs (Fales 1986), while some 200 administrative tablets and fragments in Aramaic have been discovered that date to the seventh to the sixth centuries BCE (Gzella 2015, 109; see also Streck 2011, 417-418). After the sixth century BCE, the evidence for Aramaic increases, but it never comes close to the amount of texts written in Akkadian at the same time.

The aforementioned is very meager evidence for what must have been the actual situation regarding the use of Aramaic versus Akkadian in both Assyria and Babylonia. Furthermore, its use as secondary administrative language, as Aramaic is presented in the written material, hardly explains the outcome of the contact between Aramaic and Akkadian, namely the death of Akkadian as a spoken language and its replacement by Aramaic around the fifth to fourth centuries BCE. Language shift usually involves a period of bilingualism that precedes the monolingualism in a new language. In many cases of language shift, a group becomes transitionally bilingual in a new language, often through contact with a more powerful group, until the new language becomes the main spoken language and the former native language is given up (Romaine 2003, 526–527). This means that Aramaic must have first become the secondary language of the local Akkadian speaking population, resulting in Akkadian – Aramaic bilingualism, before it became the predominant language, which led to the decline of Akkadian as spoken language. How and when this happened, and especially why Aramaic rose to such a predominance over the language of the seemingly militarily and culturally predominant local population, is impossible to tell with the evidence at our disposal. The written record does not reflect this language shift until centuries later – Akkadian being written until the first century CE.

Besides the meager textual evidence, the growing influence of Aramaic can be noticed through contact features in Akkadian such as loanwords and grammatical structures that reflect interference from Aramaic. It is disputed how many Aramaic loanwords there are in first millennium BCE Akkadian, especially in Neo and Late Babylonian. The loanwords that are more widely accepted come from semantic fields such as alphabetic writing, trade, cattle farming, and the military (Gzella 2015, 122). In general, Neo Assyrian shows relatively little and primarily lexical influence from Aramaic (Streck 2011, 418), while Neo and Late Babylonian also exhibit interference in their grammar. Beaulieu (2013) suggests a few grammatical features in Neo and Late Babylonian that are most likely the result of contact with Aramaic, such as the form *anīnu* for the 1cp independent pronoun "us" for normative Akkadian *nīnu*. This form is most likely the result of an analogical extension of the initial syllable of the Aramaic pronoun (Beaulieu 2013, 363–364). Another feature is the appearance of a 3fs prefix *t-* on the preterite and durative, where normative Babylonian has *i-*, as in 3fs *taparras* instead of *iparras*. This shift from *i-* to *t-* is most likely influenced

by Aramaic, which regularly has a *t*-prefix in the 3fs. Furthermore, the form *iprus* can be used as precative/jussive without the common Akkadian precative marker *l-* (as in Babylonian *liprus*), which is typical in Aramaic (Beaulieu 2013, 364-370). There is thus both lexical and structural influence on Akkadian. The influence of Akkadian on Aramaic, on the other hand, is primarily lexical (Gzella 2015, 120). There are about 200 Akkadian loanwords in Aramaic, mostly in eastern Aramaic varieties such as Syriac, Mandaic, and Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, which primarily consist of nouns relating to administration, economy, law, and a few other semantic fields (Gzella 2015, 120). These different borrowing patterns support the idea that Aramaic became the predominant language in Mesopotamia while Akkadian was reduced to certain functions such as administrative ones.

A last issue to be addresses is that of diglossia. It has been suggested that around the eighth to seventh centuries BCE, when Akkadian was still a spoken and fully productive language, there existed a diglossic situation in Mesopotamia that involved Akkadian as written and Aramaic as spoken language (see e.g. Gzella 2015, 119). This view, however, is rather problematic. At this time, Akkadian was most certainly still spoken, while Aramaic was also written and used as an administrative language. To which degree both languages were used for each function is impossible to know, but given that Aramaic was written on perishable material, we simply do not have the material evidence to judge how widely it was used in writing. Claims of diglossia involving Akkadian and Aramaic at this time should thus be viewed with caution since both Aramaic and Akkadian were used in writing and as spoken languages.

There is another situation during the first millennium BCE that might be analyzed as diglossic, however, and that is the use between different forms of Akkadian. During the first millennium BCE, Neo Assyrian, Neo Babylonian, and Late Babylonian were used for writing certain genres such as letters and administrative texts. For literary purposes, a different form of Akkadian, Standard Babylonian, was used. Neo Assyrian and Neo Babylonian were certainly closer to what people actually spoke than the artificially created literary dialect of Standard Babylonian (see chapter 25). Beaulieu has suggested (2013, 359) that there was diglossia between the spoken forms of Neo Assyrian and Neo Babylonian versus Standard Babylonian as the literary language. Although the former were also written, we can notice a clear functional and institutionalized division between the different varieties of Akkadian at this time. When we look for diglossia in Akkadian, this would certainly be a good place to start.

Diglossia in Aramaic

As discussed in the previous section, it can be difficult to determine if a situation represents diglossia when dealing with ancient languages because of the lack of evidence for the spoken varieties and the, often ambiguous, data coming from written sources. There is one case, however, that very closely resembles Ferguson's definition and examples of diglossia that can be found in the evidence of ancient Semitic languages, and that is the case of Aramaic during the Achaemenid period. During the Old Aramaic period, that is, during the ninth and eighth centuries BCE, the Aramaic inscriptions found in the Levant, northern Mesopotamia, and Anatolia clearly show dialect variations. There did not exist a standardized dialect used for writing but each of the independent Aramean states, such as

Damascus, Hamath, Arpad, Tell Halaf, and Sam'al, used their own variety of Aramaic in writing (Folmer 1995, 1). With the spread of Aramaic as administrative language, first with the Assyrians and then, more importantly, the Achaemenid Empire, however, the written form of Aramaic was standardized based on a particular variety of Aramaic and exhibits an astounding degree of uniformity, although certain minor variations depending on area and genre are found as well (for a general study of Imperial Aramaic see Folmer 1995; see also chapter 17). Despite these minor variations, the textual material attested during the Achaemenid period represents a standardized norm used for writing that replaced the previous local written varieties. This does not mean, however, that people also spoke the same variant of Aramaic used in writing. That this was not the case is clear from the fact that local varieties, such as Nabatean, Hatran, various Jewish Aramaic dialects, etc., start to emerge in writing after the decline of the Achaemenid Empire. These local varieties did not emerge from nothing but reflect dialects that were continued to be spoken during the Achaemenid Empire, they just were not used in writing – although they might have been responsible for some of the local variations attested in Imperial Aramaic (see e.g. Gzella 2015, 164). During the Achaemenid Empire we thus have a very clear functional distribution of different varieties of Aramaic: Imperial Aramaic, the standardized written form, was used for all types of writing, while the local dialects were solely used for oral communication and only started to be written after the loss of the central administrative and political power that had driven the standardization and unification of the official idiom. Although this period is often overlooked in discussions of diglossia in the Ancient Near East (for an exception see Taylor 2002, 301), it represents a proto-typical example of diglossia according to Ferguson's definition of the term.

Hebrew and Aramaic

Another situation that is often interpreted as representing diglossia is that of Hebrew or Hebrew and Aramaic during the late Second Temple period, that is, between 100 BCE and 100 CE. Much work has in particular been done on the linguistic situation of Jews in Palestine during the first century CE (see e.g. Paulston 2000; Porter 2000; Smith 2000; Spolsky 1991; Watt 2000). During this time, multiple languages were spoken by the Jewish population of the area, including Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and Latin. It is commonly accepted that the variant of Hebrew that was spoken at this time was Mishnaic Hebrew (Spolsky 1991, 89; Rendsburg 1990, 11), while Biblical Hebrew was only used in written form, mostly for liturgical and religious purposes, that is for formal specialized functions (Smith 2000, 38). The "vernacular" form, Mishnaic Hebrew, however, was written as well in some instances, as evidenced by the so-called Bar-Kokhba letters, a bundle of 15 letters by a military commander giving instructions to his troops, which date to the first half of the second century CE. These letters consist of letters in three languages, Aramaic (eight letters), Mishnaic Hebrew (five letters), and Greek (two letters), and are usually seen as proof that Mishnaic Hebrew was indeed a spoken and not just scholarly language (Rendsburg 1990, 9; Spolsky 1991, 89). It is commonly assumed that Hebrew was spoken by at least parts of the Jewish population until the end of the Bar Kokhba rebellion, that is, until about 135 CE. The degree to which Mishnaic Hebrew was spoken at this time, however, is highly disputed. Some scholars assume that it was still used by a

majority of the Jewish population in at least areas such as Judea (e.g. Spolsky 1991, 89), while others assume that Aramaic was the primary language of the Jewish population of that time and Hebrew was primarily used by educated Jews (e.g. Porter 2000, 57).

It is well known that Aramaic had started to replace Hebrew as a spoken language in Palestine centuries earlier. By the first century CE, Aramaic and Hebrew speaking areas had been adjacent and in direct contact for at least a millennium. Furthermore, during the Babylonian exile, Jews were increasingly exposed to Aramaic, which was one of the major languages used in Babylonia at the time. Lastly, as mentioned above, Aramaic had become the official language of the Achaemenid Empire, which caused it to spread over large areas of the Ancient Near East. All of these factors led the originally Hebrew speaking population of Palestine to increasingly use Aramaic. By the first century CE, Aramaic had become the local vernacular of the area (Spolsky 1991, 94). Besides its use as spoken language, Aramaic was also used for various written and official purposes, including commercial and legal transactions such as marriage and divorce contracts. It was further used for liturgical purposes in the form of Targumim, which are translations of the Hebrew Bible into Aramaic. These Targumim were initially only transmitted and recited orally, although eventually they were written down as well. Targumim were intended for the general population who did not understand Hebrew any longer and thus must have been in an Aramaic dialect that was relatively close to a spoken form – although how close or how different Targumic Aramaic was to the everyday colloquial Aramaic exactly is difficult to know. Within these various types of written Aramaic, it is further possible to distinguish certain regional variants, such as Judean and Galilean Aramaic (Watt 2000, 30).

As can be seen from this short description, the linguistic situation of Jews in Palestine during the late Second Temple period is rather complex. There were two distinguishable variants of Hebrew used for different purposes, Biblical and Mishnaic Hebrew, and also several varieties of Aramaic that were both written and spoken.

Based on this situation, scholars have suggested two main options for diglossia during this period. The most common view found is that, in accordance with Ferguson's initial definition of the term, there existed diglossia between two varieties of the same language, namely Biblical and Mishnaic Hebrew. Biblical Hebrew supposedly represents the High variety, that is, the variety used for literature, while Mishnaic Hebrew reflects the Low variety used for everyday communication (see e.g. Rendsburg 1990, 7-9; Spolsky 1991, 91; Smith 2000, 49–50). As reasonable as this interpretation seems at first sight, it faces several problems. As mentioned before, it is far from certain to which degree Mishnaic Hebrew was still spoken during the late Second Temple period. Furthermore, Biblical Hebrew was not the most commonly written language of the Jewish community of the time. It is true that it was used for religious and liturgical purposes, but it did not represent an institutionalized written standard for other types of writing. Aramaic and Greek were written more commonly, especially for legal and administrative purposes. The situation is thus more complex than simply assuming two varieties of Hebrew that stand in a diglossic relationship. Biblical and Mishnaic Hebrew are functionally distinct, but it is questionable if they truly meet the criteria for diglossia set up by Ferguson. The simple division between Biblical Hebrew = H and Mishnaic Hebrew = L further neglects to incorporate Aramaic and Greek, which were both widely used languages in the Jewish communities at this time. During the first century CE, Greek was the language of government in Palestine.

Greek was also used for both public and private inscriptions, including many Jewish tomb inscriptions (Spolsky 1991, 95–96; Smith 2002, 63). In a simplified way, Hebrew was used for sacred writing, Aramaic for legal contracts and commerce, and Greek for government writing and many public and private inscriptions (Spolsky 1991, 98; Taylor 2002, 301). Of course, there were local variations in the distribution of these languages, differences between towns that had large Greek-speaking population groups and those that did not, urban and rural areas, etc., but the aforementioned distribution of written languages holds roughly in general.

Given these issues, it has also been suggested that there was no diglossia between two varieties of the same language, but, according to the broadened definition of diglossia introduced by Fishman, between two different but closely related languages, namely Hebrew and Aramaic. This idea has in particular been promoted by Watt (2000). Watt considers Aramaic, which he says was both written and spoken within the Jewish community during the late Second Temple period, to be the native language of Jews at this time, that is, the idiom used for all types of verbal and unofficial communications, while Hebrew was only used by certain scholarly circles and perhaps in the temple (Watt 2000, 25–26). In order to incorporate Greek, which Watt says was both written and spoken, he introduces the concept of "tertiary" (T) language. A tertiary language is a third language in addition to the two others that form a diglossic situation, which has to be included for a comprehensive descriptions of a given linguistic community (Watt 2000, 32–34). Again, this idea faces several problems. The extent to which Aramaic was spoken is unknown, although it seems that it was more widely used than Mishnaic Hebrew. The biggest issue, however, is that Aramaic was, as mentioned before and as admitted by Watt himself, written as well and even used for liturgical purposes in the form of Targumim. Consequently, Aramaic does not fit the usual understanding of a Low variety at this particular time period and the distinction of Aramaic as L and Hebrew as H fails to convince.

Given these issues, scholars have also suggested not to use the concept of diglossia for describing the linguistic situation in Palestine in the late Second Temple period, but to use other models and approaches to analyze the function and usages of the different languages and varieties of this time, such as register studies (see e.g. Porter 2000, 72). Considering the complexity of the multilingual situation, a different approach might indeed be more fruitful for the analysis of the linguistic situation during the late Second Temple period.

Conclusion

As can be seen from the preceding discussion, the question of diglossia in Ancient Near Eastern societies is a complex one. It is essential for the study of diglossia to be aware what languages/dialects people speak in their everyday interactions, but it is exactly this evidence that is not available in most cases when working with ancient languages. Scholars of ancient languages are naturally limited to written evidence and consequently limited in the conclusions they can draw with regard to any sociolinguistic situation.

Consequently, although multilingualism is prevalent in Ancient Near Eastern societies, it can be difficult to determine how this multilingualism was realized in practice, that is, to what degree the general population was bi- or multilingual and for which functions

the specific languages were used exactly. This does not mean that studies of diglossia and related phenomena should be abandoned, they should just be conducted and viewed with the necessary caution and the awareness of the difficulties involved in the interpretation of the evidence.

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PART V

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LITERARY LANGUAGES AND LITERARY CONTACT

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Standard Babylonian

Christian W. Hess

Introduction

Standard Babylonian (SB) describes the common language of Akkadian literature from the second half of the second millennium BCE to the Hellenistic and Parthian periods. The corpus includes both poetry and prose, overtly political works such as monumental inscriptions as well as poetic, religious, and scholarly texts (Kouwenberg 2010, 16–17). The span roughly coincides with three overlapping periods of Akkadian literature, each connected with distinct social and political settings: the nascence of Standard Babylonian in the internationalized Late Bronze Age; the transmission and standardization of literature under the Neo-Assyrian empire; and the Neo-Babylonian, Achaemenid, and Hellenistic periods, often (wrongly) viewed as a period of long decline in literary productivity (Foster 2007, 12). SB is particularly heterogeneous across this corpus and time. It nonetheless asserts its coherence through two features: alterity, as SB contrasts with the contemporary dialects used in most letters, economic, and administrative texts; and archaism, as SB either preserves or recreates features of older language (Groneberg 1987, 3; Foster 2005, 3–4; Kouwenberg 2010, 16; Kouwenberg 2012, 439–441). Specifically, it is thought to adapt, continue, or revive the Old Babylonian (OB; ca. 2000–1600 BC) dialect as a classical standard and fits neatly into the view of the age of Hammurapi as a political, cultural, and linguistic model (Maul 2001, 119; Schaudig 2001, 3).

Though consensus has crystallized along these broad lines since the term was first introduced (von Soden 1953), no comprehensive grammar of SB is currently available, and extant summaries vary widely in detail (cf. von Soden 1995, 298–299 §191; Huehnergard 2005, 595–598). To what degree any feature can be generalized remains largely unclear. The conflation of SB with OB as the "sole vehicle of literary creativeness" (Oppenheim

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1977, 55; see also Buccellati 1996, 1) and subsequent relegation of divergent features to late, dialectal intrusions tend to preclude attention to considerable diachronic, generic, or even text-specific variation in the corpus. While "standard" should of course not be understood as invariant (Groneberg 1987, 3), it does depend heavily on the notion of stable variation within the same general parameters (Anipa 2012, 183). Barring any exclusive set of defining features for SB, however, the following overview will first focus on identifying and isolating broader trends in the literary language during the latter half of the second millennium, when SB is thought to have developed. Recent discussions on style and language variation have highlighted the ways in which linguistic choices, particularly in settings involving a complex mixture of varieties, serve to position works and communities within their cultural system (Eckert 2000; Coupland 2007). The first goal is thus to frame the rise of SB as a process of formation in competition with diverse other forms of literary expression.

A second problem facing any description of SB is the considerable synchronic and diachronic variation in the manuscripts of individual works. The process of repeatedly copying and editing texts over countless generations both preserved older forms and introduced numerous, sometimes quite subtle changes, including changes in linguistic form. The subsequent unstable orthography, proliferation of seemingly interchangeable forms, inconsistent case-marking, and almost chaotic syntax closely echo the catalogue of issues facing text-critical studies as well as other literary grammars (Worthington 2012; Anipa 2012, 172; cf. Wilhelm 2015). A look at two of the most prominent works of SB literature, the Gilgamesh Epic and the Creation Epic *Enūma eliš*, should suggest to what degree earlier literary language was continued or transformed.

Early Standard Babylonian and the Late Bronze Age

The origins of SB coincide with the period of Great Powers in the Late Bronze Age, with its attendant intensification of state relations and mobility of peoples and ideas at all levels of society (Reiner 1966, 21; Foster 2007, 12). This mobility had several important correlates. Middle Babylonian (MB) in countless local forms spread as a language of written communication throughout the Near East, together with Akkadian literature and the institution of cuneiform education, across diverse paths of transmission. The exchange relied both on the regular movement of scribes and tablets and on the occasional looting of tablets and artefacts following military conquests. Against the plunder of artefacts from Babylon under Tukultī-Ninurta I and Tiglath-pileser I (Bartelmus and Schmitt 2014), we can set the collection of hemerologies from across Babylonia under the Kassite Nazi-Maruttaš (Heeßel 2011, 171–173; Frazer 2013, 197–198), the copying of originals from Susa in Babylonia (Rutz 2006), the activities of the Babylonian scribal family of Uššur-ana-Marduk in the Assyrian capital (Wiggermann 2008), or the career of the physician Rabâ-ša-Marduk at both Babylonian Nippur and Anatolian Hattusa (Heeßel 2009).

This spread moved Akkadian literature towards a common, panchoric tradition which transcended regional boundaries without necessarily negating local traditions (Pongratz-Leisten 2011; cf. Beecroft 2010, 14). It also opened Akkadian literary language to the possible influence of numerous languages and dialects. From the older languages, it could

draw on both various OB dialects, largely levelled by the end of the period, as well as the distinct language of OB literary texts. One subset of literary texts, notably clustered in several hymns and royal compositions, stands out in its heavy but disparate use of archaic and archaizing features, collectively subsumed under the term hymnic-epic dialect: apocopated or syncopated forms of enclitic pronouns, declination of determinative pronouns, variant bound forms in genitive constructions, terminative and locative suffixes in non-adverbial case function, differentiation of masculine and feminine prefixes in the 3rd person prefix conjugation, vocalization of the Š-stem of verbs I-*w*, the formation of a morphologically hybrid causative/factitive or ŠD-stem, and apocopated or suppletive forms of the prepositions (von Soden 1931 and 1933; Hess 2010; Kouwenberg 2012, 438–439; Lambert 2013, 34–44). To older OB and hymnic-epic forms the Late Bronze Age tradition adds the contemporary dialects of Middle Babylonian (MB; Aro 1955) and Middle Assyrian (MA; Mayer 1971). All of these varieties of Akkadian influenced early SB literary texts to varying degrees. The early development of SB is thus linked to the process by which countless regional traditions and their associated dialects converged towards a common standard.

While the Late Bronze Age is often viewed as one of the greatest periods of literary creativity in Mesopotamian history (von Soden 1953, 22; Lambert 1960, 13), this evaluation has traditionally been based mostly on either later copies or texts from the western periphery in Syria and Anatolia. Contemporary texts from Assyria and Babylonia proper are sparse and mostly fragmentary, weighted towards a few scribal centers (Sassmannshausen 2008). Larger collections of Babylonian literary texts are attested at Babylon and the traditional cultic and provincial center of Nippur. Additional texts, either from Babylonia or written in Babylonian ductus, were found at the Assyrian capital at Assur. The Assyrian transmission is mostly confined to the capital at Assur, though sporadic texts are attested at Kalḫu and Nineveh, including important fragments of the royal epic of Tukultī-Ninurta I (Machinist 1978). Paleographic and internal criteria are essential for dating, as many are preserved only in later contexts, particularly the "Library of Tiglath-Pileser I," reconstructed from the debris of Neo-Assyrian levels near the temple of Assur. Based on colophons and ductus, many texts can be assigned to small circles of scholarly families in direct royal service (Geller 1990; Wiggermann 2008; Wagensonner 2011).

Monumental Inscriptions in Babylonia

Diachronic trends can most easily be read from the corpus of monumental inscriptions, generally datable to specific reigns. In the Late Bronze Age, these fall into two main groups: dedicatory and building inscriptions (Frame 1995; Stein 2000; Clayden 2011), and *kudurru*s, private monuments ultimately derived from legal texts, which commemorate royal land grants and privileges (overview, editions, and sigla in Paulus 2014). Numerous examples expand this textual core through introductory prayers and narratives and concluding imprecations to safeguard the privileges granted.

Taken together, the language of both groups yields a remarkably consistent picture. Following Late OB and MB usage, almost all vowels are contracted, with occasional

exceptions. Curses are directed against "all those named" (*nabiʾat*) (MŠ 1 vi 14) or extended to any who should act against *nignakka anniʾam* "this censer" (MŠ 3 iii 18) or *narâ anniʾam* "this stele" (MŠ 3 iii 23; MB *annâ*). A few inscriptions reflect the MB shift of /a/ to /e/ in the Š- and D-stems and /š/ to /l/ before dental: Kurigalzu II had a dirk of reddish-silver fashioned (*uštebni-ma* George 2011, 117 Nr. 61, 27; OB *uštabni-ma*, MB *ultebni-ma*) to commemorate his vengeance against the enemies of Nippur. Ninurta is called upon to fill (*limellišu-ma*) the body of any who act against an inscription with leprosy (NM 1 ii 28). Otherwise, OB forms with /a/-vowel and -*š*D(ental)- prevail: cf. *limallišu* in the same formula (MAI I 5 iii 10′); just as Sîn may clothe (*lilabbiš-ma* MNA 2 ii 17; U 28 i′ 8′; MB *lilebbiš*) him with leprosy or destroy (*liḫalliqa* U 3 iv 22; MB *liḫelliqa*) his offspring. MB as well is the loss of mimation, though exceptions can be noted until the end of the Isin II-dynasty (1157–1026), as in the archaizing orthography of royal names. These are underscored by archaizing hypercorrections, as in Marduk-šāpik-zēri's ([1d]AMAR.UTU-*ša-pí-ik-*[2]*ze-ri-im*) traditional title "king of the four quarters" ([6]*šar kibrat* [7][(x)] *ar-ba-um* Frame 1995, 45 I 6f.), with *a*-vowel but historically incorrect nominative (Old Akkadian *kibrat arbaʾim*; OB *kibrat erbettim*). Case itself is generally stable according to the expected MB pattern.

The pronominal system is similarly mixed, though older forms predominate. The independent and anaphoric pronouns usually reflect older, uncontracted *šuāti* (3ms genitive/accusative), even as MB collapses the contracted earlier accusative *šâtu* and dative *šâšu* into the latter. With inscriptions from the time of Meli-Šipak (1186–1172), *šâšu* occasionally creeps into the inscriptions as a genitive/accusative as well, as the great gods "shall not let that him (*šâšu*), his name and his seed exist" (MŠ 2 iv 8), or a transactional narrative is specified *ina šatti šâši* "in this year" (MŠ 4 v 5). The few attestations of the enclitic pronouns as indirect objects seem to reflect the same MB collapse: the same narrative states *ilṭuraššunūti-ma* "he sent to them (a tablet for the river-ordeal)" (MŠ 4 iv 39; OB *išṭuraššunūšim-ma*). These examples highlight the simultaneous hybrid retention of OB and admission of MB features as well as the necessary distinction between variable or occasional forms and more consistent features.

One of the few inscriptions which suggests a social, non-royal motivation for this sort of archaism records grants of land and privileges from the time of Kadašman-Ḫarbe I for Marduk-šamši-ilī, divination priest and scion of a family of priests and scribes (KḪ I 1; Paulus 2014, 296–304), who also emphasizes his own cultural authority by defining himself as a Sumerian (KḪ I 1 i 19). In addition to the archaizing tendencies noted above, the text uses several construct states *-i* (genitive) and *-u* (all cases) before the genitive: the priest is the "descendant of Bēl-tabtani-bulliṭ, purification-priest of the Eugalgala-temple" ([23]*ramki* [24]*Eugalgala* KḪ I i 22–24), of the family of Lu-Dumununa, who conveyed the [28]… *taklīmtu* [29d]*Addu* "instructions of Adad" (KḪ I i 28f.). The monument confirms boundaries which had been thrown into disarray *in Samsu-ditāna* "in (the time of) Samsu-ditāna" (KḪ I i 4), located [2]*in erṣeti* [3]*Ḫamri* "in the district of Ḫamru" (KḪ I i 2f.) to provide [2]*an šattukkīšu* [3]*dārî* "for his continual daily offering" (KḪ I iii 2f.), all with apocopated prepositions *an*(*a*) and *in*(*a*). The heavily archaizing language underscores the legitimizing connection to tradition implied in the emphasized priestly descent: both status and access play a role in shaping and maintaining linguistic tradition.

Middle Assyrian Developments

These Babylonian developments also bring the language of contemporary Assyrian literature into sharper focus. Despite the close connections between Babylonia and Assyria, the latter certainly maintained and developed its own traditions. Assyria's emergence from under the shadow of Mittani at the beginning of the fourteenth century also saw the increase of monumental inscriptions to commemorate the deeds of Assur's independent kings, roughly divisible into three groups (Grayson 1987; 1991; Borger 1961; Galter 1997). Even as Assyria began to assert its international position in the years from Aššur-bēl-nišēšu (1417–1409) to Arik-dēn-ili (1317–1306), the inscriptions remained mostly confined to short building and dedicatory inscriptions with brief introduction, building report, and imprecations or blessings. As in MA, vowels generally remain uncontracted, initial OB *wa-* appears as *u-*, the prefix of the precative D-stem has *lu-* instead of *li-*: Aššur-uballiṭ I directs his blessings against any *rubāʾu urkiʾu* "later prince" (Grayson 1987, 113 rev. 9′; MB *rubû arkû*) who shall preserve his monuments (*lutēr* ibid. rev. 14; MB *litēr*) and whose prayers the gods will hear (*išammeʾū* ibid. rev. 13′; MB *išemmû*) in the same forms as his predecessors (cf. Grayson 1987, 102 l. 15′). While Babylonian (*išemme* "he will listen"; Grayson 1987, 122 l. 64f.) or even mixed forms (*išammû* "they will listen"; Grayson 1987, 119 l. 9) occur from the time of Aššur-uballiṭ I on (1363–1328), the language is still predominantly Assyrian.

Following Adad-nērārī I's (1305–1274) military conquests, the introductory and imprecatory sections are expanded considerably, including extensive laudatory epithets, while narrative sections are alternately incorporated into the introductions or independently inserted before the building reports. Though the rise of SB in Assyria has been connected explicitly with the reign of the warrior king Adad-nērārī I (Foster 2007, 12), we find few echoes of contemporary Babylonian trends under that king or his immediate successors. Where the Babylonian texts skew heavily towards archaizing forms, the Assyrian inscriptions in the second group show either a tendency towards MB forms or a mixture of both – they align most closely with the features for SB given in Huehnergard 2005, 595–598. As in MB, vowels are regularly contracted: Shalmaneser is the *zēru dārû* "eternal seed" (Grayson 1987, 185 l. 109), the god Assur "joyfully sets up (*irammû*) his lofty dais" (ibid. 149–150) as he enters *ana bīti šâtu* "into that house" (ibid. 148–150; Assyrian *šuātu/i*), with anaphoric pronouns regularly in their MB contracted form. OB initial *wa-* regularly appears as MB *a-*, as the curses are no longer addressed to the Assyrian *rubāʾu urkiʾu*, but the MB *rubû arkû* "later prince" (Grayson 1987, 240 l. 47). The OB *-šD-* and MA and MB *-lD*-forms are evenly attested, as evildoers are cursed either with an *erreta marulta* or *marušta* "evil curse" (Grayson 1987, 186 l. 166; Grayson 1987, 134 l. 51), as are D- and Š-stems with either /a/ or /e/-vowel in the second syllable. Though the predecessors are still addressed as the Assyrian *abbāʾūja* "my fathers" (Grayson 1987, 148 l. 5), the gods entreated to destroy, *luḫalliqū* (Grayson 1987, 134 l. 53), the seed of any wrong-doers, specifically Assyrian forms mostly disappear.

The comparison with two of the better-known works of MA literature, the royal epic of Tukultī-Ninurta I commemorating his conquest of Babylonia (Tn-Ep = Machinist 1978; Foster 2005, 298–317) and a bilingual lamentation prayer to Assur (Ebeling 1919 No 128; Foster 2005, 318–323), shows a similarly coherent picture. Vowels are again

contracted: *rubê* (Tn-Ep A i 19′) or *ilqû* (Tn-Ep B rev. 46′). With few exceptions, as in the hybrid *ultaškinu* (Tn-Ep A ii 22′; OB *uštaškinu*, MB *ulteškinu*), derived D- and Š- stems tend heavily to /e/-vowels in the second syllable, while *-šD-* regularly shifts to *-lD-*: *ša qurādīšunu ušešni ṭēma* "(Ištar) changed the warrior's reason" (Tn-Ep A ii 40′); [*t*]*ultebri gullulta* "you have displayed hostility" (Tn-Ep A iv 10′). As in MB, infixed OB *-t-* is regularly voiced following a voiced consonant, as *imdalik-ma* "he took counsel" (Tn-Ep A iv 25′), OB intervocalic *-w-* is written as *-m-*, as *amāt lemuttīni* "a word of evil against us" (Tn-Ep A v 28′), the anaphoric pronoun is contracted *šâtu*, as *ūma šâtu* "on that day" (Tn-Ep A iv 14′). Assyrian forms, as *iktešer* "he restored (the roads)" (Tn-Ep C rev. 24; OB *iktašir*), are rare. Taken together, the language of the monumental inscriptions from Adad-nērārī I to Tukultī-Ninurta I, the epic, and the lamentation prayer of Tukultī-Ninurta I comes closest in the Late Bronze Age to a court style, extending across generic boundaries while firmly anchored in a clearly defined political setting. Where the language of Babylonian inscriptions highlights their link to the OB tradition, Assyria asserts its international position through a heavily contemporary, MB voice, strongly influenced by the contemporary language of diplomacy.

This court style pushes the common literary language into the twelfth century at the earliest. The years immediately following the succession crisis after the death of Tukultī-Ninurta I up to the reign of Aššur-rēša-iši are difficult to evaluate. The developments culminate, however, in the annalistic inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser I and Aššur bēl-kala shortly before the collapse of the MA state, by which time the language has again shifted. Vowels are again mostly contracted, but the number of exceptions increases: *aššiʾanni* "I lifted up" (Grayson 1991, 44 l. 60); *lišmeʾū* "may they hear" (Grayson 1991, 29 viii 26). The distinction of nominative and accusative begins to dissolve, e.g. the direct object *tāḫāssu ezz*[*u*] "his raging battle" Grayson 1991, 41 l. 11 (MB/MA acc. *ezza*), while *-ānū/-ānī* become more common as suppletive plural endings. Verbs show a pronounced tendency to /a/ vocalization in the D- and Š-stems: alongside *ukenniš* "I subdued" (Grayson 1991, 13 i 54) we find *ušaḫḫilu-ma* (Grayson 1991, 13 i 37), alongside *ušekniš* "I subdued" (Grayson 1991, 22 v 32) also *ultašpiru* "he governed" (Grayson 1991, 13 i 33). The uncontracted pronoun *šuātu* becomes more common, e.g. *āla šuātu* "that city" (Grayson 1991, 19 iv 3), *šâtu* is relatively rare, e.g. *ašra šâtu* "that place" (Grayson 1991, 28 vii 79). While many of these developments bring the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser I (1114–1076) and Aššur-bēl-kala (1073–1056) into line with Babylonia, Assyrian features also increase markedly: *alqâššunūti* "I took them" (Grayson 1991, 14 i 87), without Babylonian vowel harmony; *ṭarpeʾe* or *ṭarpu*[ʾ*u*] "tamarisk" (Grayson 1991, 46 l. 6′; ibid., 57 l. 21′), both with Assyrian vowel harmony; or [*iš̄*]*mušunu-ma* "he has ordained them" (Grayson 1991, 52 l. 12), with the Assyrian form of the enclitic accusative pronoun.

The Evolution of Grammatical Style

The literary history of the Late Bronze Age is often framed by complementary diachronic and synchronic movements: the reception and diffusion of OB literature in and from Kassite Babylonia; and its adaptation and transformation in Assyria. Within both, the

archaizing and colloquial patterns dominant in the OB period develop along different threads. In some cases, the language of received texts was updated to reflect contemporary usage. A Gilgamesh fragment from Ur regularly uses MB forms as it recounts Enkidu's cursing and blessing of the hunter and harlot: *lišeḫḫi* "may (the ground) defile (your garment)!" (George 2003, 298, 16; OB *lišaḫḫi*), *limellâ* "may he fill (your ears with earrings)!" (ibid. 55). A similar modernization is attested in the MB witnesses to Etana from Assur, as in *umdellâ* "he filled" (Haul 2000, 144, 7′; OB *umtallâ*) or *lumelli* (ibid. 134, 6; OB *limelli*), with MB vowel change and Assyrian prefix. A childbirth incantation from Assur reflects both the continued use of Assyrian as a literary language and the accretion of MB in Assyrian contexts (Lambert 1969). The description of the woman in labor begins (40–42): "Like a warrior in battle she is cast in blood, her eyes are narrowed, that she can't see (Assyrian *tadaggal* 3fs; cf. Babylonian *idaggal*), her lips are pressed tight, though she can't press free (Assyrian *tapatte* 3fs; cf. Babylonian *tepette*) of death's fate…" Marduk is finally called to the woman's aid (46–49): "Stand by me… o merciful Marduk, this (Babylonian *annû*, cf. Assyrian *annīʾu*) is the fray of battle and I am surrounded (*lamáku-ma*, Babylonian /w/ > /m/), come to me! Lift high this weapon (*kakka šâti*, cf. Assyrian *šuātu/i*), creation of the gods, that the creation of man (*amēlī*, cf. Assyrian *aʾēlē*) might come forth and see the light!" Both texts most easily match the picture of a low, heavily colloquial MB or MA style as opposed to the archaizing high style of OB usage.

Heavily archaizing tendencies in OB had been largely confined to hymns and epics, and in many respects, both genres in both Babylonia and Assyria continue to provide an archaizing center. These again include rare examples of uncontracted vowels and spellings with <w> instead of <m>: *rādia* "guardian" (Ebeling 1920–23 No 375 ii 32') or *ibakkiānim* "they weep" (Lambert 1966, 53 obv. 14), and *awāt damiqtim* "a good word" (Cooper 1978, 92, 179 Ms. Aa). Most hymnic texts tend to use OB /a/-forms alone in the D- and Š-stems: *lukallim* "may he show" (Lambert 2013, 358, 31), *umaššira* "he releases" (Black 1983, 31, 11). Case remains stable, with occasional examples for mimation: *mu-ti-i*[*m*] (Vogelzang 1988, 54, 55 Ms. A); *šar-ri-im* (Ebeling 1919 No 19, 15). Anaphoric pronouns remain uncontracted: *šuātu* (Lambert 2013, 358, 30), *rēʾâ šuāti* (Ebeling 1919 No 158 i 8′). Archaizing as well is the retention of verbal *t*-stems, even as they drop from the contemporary dialects: "they recounted to one another (*iptašrūni*) their hearts' desires" (Haul 2000, 136, 13–14; Gt); "(Nuska) faced him (*uštamḫir*[*šu*]) in the Ekur" (Cooper 1978, 68, 78 Ms. bB; $Št_2$). As shown by the last example, a bilingual tablet of a Sumerian Ninurta epic, archaizing language also applies to the Akkadian translations of Sumerian originals, otherwise rare in OB.

The presence in SB of many of the OB hymnic-epic forms can thus be read as a generic continuity. Apocopated pronominal forms and bound forms of the noun in *-u* (all cases) or *-i* (genitive) occur: *umdeššir abūk* "I have released your father" (Tn-Ep A iv 11′; OB, MB *abā-ka*); […] *ša ušatlimu-š* "which he granted to him" (Tn-Ep B rev. 27′); or [*ē*]*tekmūš ina maggšar*[*i*] "they took him away by force" (Tn-Ep B obv. 26′); *elīšun* "above/over them" (Tn-Ep A iii 43′; OB *elīšunu*), or *ilīšin* "their gods" (Erra-myth Chiera 1934 No 117 iii 10′). Similarly, in a MB lamentation text, Kurigalzu is introduced as "king of wisdom, who hears mighty Šamaš (*šēmû Šamaš danna*)" (Sommerfeld 1985, l. 7), echoed in the *silḫītu lalêja* "turmoil of my charms" of a text of love lyrics (Lambert 1966, 54 obv. 17). A literary catalogue from Assur gives the catch line of a hymn with a

construct state in *-u*, *rāmī nīru mušnammeru attalî* "my love is a light, brightening the darkness" (Ebeling 1919 No 158 vii 45′). Non-adverbial terminative (*-iš*) and locative endings (*-ū*(*m*)) are also attested, though rare: locative *ana qerbūš* "in his midst" (Haul 2000, 138, 24), or *apūkka* "return to your canebrake" (Vogelzang 1988, 55, 63); terminative *muttiš Ekur* "before the Ekur" (ibid. 60, 136), or *itūrū ṭiddiš* "they turned to clay" (Chiera 1934 No 117 ii 7′); and the derived locative-terminative *-ūš*, *bītūš Ekur* "to the house Ekur" (Vogelzang 1988, 59, 114 Ms. A). In general, however, the variety of forms attested in OB texts is greatly reduced. The archaizing *ū*-forms of verbs I-*w* seem to disappear, as do most elided enclitic pronouns, with rare exceptions (*epšētašnu* Lambert 1966, 53, 11 for *-šunu*).

While similar forms are occasionally attested in older monumental inscriptions (Hess 2010, 116–117), they are simultaneously more frequent and contextually restricted in SB. Variant construct states in *-u* are generally confined to hymnic sections, divine or royal epithets: (the god) Ninurta, *mukillu rēš šarrūtīšu* "who holds his rule in honor" (George 2011, 117 Nr. 61, 23f.; Kurigalzu II); (Nebuchadnezzar), who plunders the Kassites (*šālilu Kaššî*) (NKU I 2 i 10). The apocopated preposition *in* occurs occasionally, as "in the land" (*in māti* U 3 v 3), in free variation with *ina*, as does *el* for *eli*, as Shalmaneser I's conduct is *el Aššur ṭāba* "pleasing to Assur" (Grayson 1987, 182 l. 9). Terminative (*-iš*) and locative endings (*-ū*(*m*)) are almost entirely restricted to adverbials, as in "hostilely" (*nakariš* U 3 iv 3), with the exception of "in his hand" (*qātūššu* NKU I 1 ii 5) in the long hymnic prologue to the Hinke-Kudurru, and the prayer "help me and come to my side!" (*rūṣam-ma iâti idūja alk*[*am*] Frame 1996, 14 iv 3b) in a bilingual building inscription. The imprecations of Adad-nērārī I include an example of the terminative in comparative function, as Adad "shall pass through his land like a deluge (*abūbiš*)" (Grayson 1987, 134 l. 58), just as Tukultī-Ninurta I bears the epithet of "who shepherded his land in verdant pastures (*aburriš*)" (Grayson 1987, 271 l. 7; cf. Kouwenberg 2012, 447). The imprecations also include examples of the apocopated enclitic pronoun *-š* (3ms accusative, rarely dative; cf. OB *-šum*, MB *-šu*): *līrurūš* "May (the great gods) curse him" (MŠ 1 vi 28); or *lišīmūš* "may they ordain for him (the curse)" (MAI 3 iii 21; dative). Apocopated genitive forms (*-š* for OB, MB *-šu*) and dative forms are rare: *napšatuš liballi* "may he extinguish his life" (NKU I 1 iv 4: genitive, with accusative construct state in *-u*).

At no time does an exclusive, prescriptive linguistic form emerge for literary texts. A few general tendencies are, however, apparent. The diffusion, simplification, and levelling usually associated with the formation of koine languages (Kerswill 2002) provides a good comparative model. Phonologically, most words exhibit an admixture of older and contemporary dialects (OB, MB, and MA), with archaizing *-šD*-forms, for example, alongside regularly contracted vowels. Diffusion is sensible both in the incorporation of Babylonian forms in traditional Assyrian texts, as in the incantation discussed above, and in the spread of many typically hymnic-epic forms from OB literature into other text types as well, such that the features are no longer generically marked. The embedding of laudatory epithets and other hymnic sections in monumental inscriptions and incantations provides a likely conduit. The shift in Assyrian monumental inscriptions following the death of Tukultī-Ninurta I may fit into this picture as well. The language of the inscriptions approaches that of its Babylonian counterparts while simultaneously admitting an increased number of Assyrian forms. Many of the resulting forms, including the /a/-vocalization of Š- and

D-stems and the uncontracted anaphoric pronouns (*šuātu* etc.), are identical in both the OB and MA dialects. From the Assyrian point of view, the language both matches the Babylonian model and leads to a decrease of dialectally iconic, specifically MB forms in the literary language. Evidence for the motivation behind these processes is less clear. Archaisms in court literature certainly align the kings with the claims of their predecessors, both local and universal, just as archaisms in priestly and scholarly works reaffirm their roles as guardians of tradition. However, with few exceptions, such as the proposed court style of the Tukultī-Ninurta I-period, there is so far little from either Assyria or Babylonia to suggest that SB resulted from conscious or centralized scribal reform. Rather, the characteristic admixture seems to have evolved in large part as an organic correlate to the spread of Akkadian literature and its transmission within a network of linked scribal or royal centers.

Stability and Change in the First Millennium

The flourishing of literary activity in the later second millennium culminates in the presumed canonization of Mesopotamian literature, characterized by a greater degree of textual stability within the stream of tradition. This image is based largely on the efforts of the royal scribes in the service of the Neo-Assyrian libraries of the capitals at Nineveh and Kalḫu. However this textual standardization is understood, even in this period SB never attained an invariant form. Recent attention to the production of smaller libraries from the old capital at Assur, the provincial center at Ḫuzirīna, and the later temple libraries of Babylon, Sippar, and Uruk has highlighted the ways in which local traditions diverge both before and after the fall of Nineveh in 612 BC (Foster 2007; Robson 2011; Lambert 1968). The language of inscriptions continued to change, just as individual compositions at the Assyrian royal courts were written almost entirely in Assyrian dialect or individual scribes and scholars responsible for the production and dissemination of literary works incorporated archaisms into their correspondence with the court as an intellectual affectation (Worthington 2006).

Against this backdrop, we can evaluate the language of two works generally thought to have reached their characteristic forms at the end of the later second millennium, the Creation Epic *Enūma eliš* (Ee; Lambert 2013) and SB Gilgamesh (Gilg; George 2003). The two belong to the most widely circulated works of the first millennium and resonate throughout the Mesopotamian literary tradition. Along with other literary texts, both also served as literary models both for the composition of court poetry and inscriptions and as paradigms of royal behavior (Pongratz-Leisten 2015). The importance is most obviously underscored by the annual recitation of Ee as an integral part of the New Year's festival, during which the king's divine mandate was again confirmed.

Nevertheless, the process of transmission and the cumulative effect of countless small-scale variants across manuscripts heavily affects the interpretation of grammatical style. In Gilgamesh, for example, the accusative enclitic pronoun is given in its full form in *attadī-šu* "I cast him" I 253 (Ms. B), but apocopated as [*attad*]*īš* in Ms. h. In *Enūma eliš*, the literary forms *šibqīšun* "their tricks" (Ee I 60) is recorded as *šib-qí-šu-nu* in Ms. B, Mss. ab record the longer preposition *a-na* for *an ilānī* "to the gods" Ee I 60, Ms. b uses *el*[*i*]

for *elu ḫarmēša* "to her spouse" in Ee I 42, and the early Ms. O uses the D-stem *nu-ḫallaq* where later manuscripts give the ŠD-stem *nušḫallaq* "we shall destroy" in Ee I 46. The variants are common enough that a sweeping explanation by appeal to orthography (e.g. <*a-na*> for */an/*) seems unconvincing.

The most stable phonological features of both works are the relatively consistent use of *-šD-* instead of *-lD*-forms and */a/*-forms in the D- and Š-stem preterite: *uštamḫiršu* "he faced him" (Gilg I 114), *uštāpû* "they were formed" (Ee I 10). Exceptions in both texts are either sporadic or restricted to individual manuscripts: *lušeṣmidka* Gilg VI 10 (only Ms. O) vs. *lušaṣmidka* (Ms. A, Q). Regular, but less frequent, are the partial, progressive assimilation of unvoiced to voiced consonants, e.g. *ugdaššar* "he was mightier" (Gilg I 64; OB *ugtaššar*), and the homorganic dissimilation of voiced nasal geminates, *uštanandanū* "they exchange" (Gilg II 247; OB *uštanaddanū*) or *punḫul* "massive" (Ee I 18; OB *puḫḫul*). Both works contain sporadic Assyrian forms, as *iptirik* "he blocked" (Gilg II 111 Ms. X_2; Babylonian *iptarik*) or Assyrian *nuna"er* Gilg VIII 22 (Ms. **e**), particularly noted for early Neo-Assyrian manuscripts of Gilgamesh (George 2003, 436). In at least one group, these forms are particularly frequent. Many of the variants in manuscripts from the provincial center of Ḫuzirīna, including *nāpuš* Ee VI 51 Ms. M (Ms. A: *nīpuš*), *lū zakir* Ee VII 50 Ms. J (Ms. I: *lizzakir*), or *ellat Puratti* Gilg VIII 19 Ms. **e** (Ms. V_2: *elletu* [*Pu*]*rattum*), can be identified as Assyrian dialect forms. Here scribal or local usage seems decisive.

The treatment of case is perhaps the most complex feature of both. The general loss of mimation is highlighted again by hypercorrections such as *ana-ku-um-ma* (Gilg XI 123) for the pronoun *anāku* (cf. Schaudig 2001, 113). The progressive drop of case distinctions in Babylonian and Assyrian, beginning with the collapse of short nominative and accusative endings already at the end of the second millennium, ended with a complete loss of case distinction in the singular and long *-ī* (Assyrian *-ē*) in the plural (Streck 2014). Most manuscripts already reflect the collapse of nominative and accusative, including the direct objects *šānin* "equal" Ee I 20 (Ms. M) or *a-bu-bu taš*[*un*] "you caused the deluge" Gilg XI 184 (Mss. C, J_1, **b**, $\mathbf{c}_2$; cf. *taškunu a-bu-ba* Gilg XI 188 Mss. J_1, **b**). The genitive seems to disappear as well, as *ana za-qí-qu* Ee I 124 or *šūt tam-ḫa-a-ru* Ee I 151. Even early manuscripts already seem to reflect a collapse in plural endings to *-ī*, as in [*aššum* dingir^{meš}]*-nu* "because of the gods" Ee I 34 (Ms. O) for expected *ilānī* or the variants *šá-ma-mu* and *šá-ma-mi* Ee I 1 (Ms. K) for expected *šamāmū*. The most stable case markings are found in contracted endings, as in the direct object [*ap*]*sâ* "the Apsû" (Ee I 47). Genitive bound forms before enclitic pronouns are relatively stable. Otherwise, examples for consistent retention of MB/MA case are restricted to individual manuscripts or scribes (Worthington 2012, 200–204). Judged as a whole, however, the case system of both works largely reflects NB/NA usage.

In the treatment of construct states before the genitive or enclitic pronouns, the language of the two works begins to diverge more significantly. Stability of case also affects the interpretation of constructs. The archaizing *-u*-ending is attested in *šullumu erēni* Gilg II 227 in Ms. X_2 from Nineveh, though the fragment also shows signs of Neo-Babylonian case patterns in the genitive *ma-a-⌐tu¬* (II 114) and subject *i-ḫa-⌐ra¬* (II 115). Two clear examples, both involving contracted final vowels, are *pētû nērebēti* "opening passes" (Gilg I 38) and *ḫērû būrī* "digging wells" (Gilg I 39). Examples are slightly more frequent in Ee, as in *bānû ašnan* "creating grain" (Ee VII 79) or *mušabšû ašnan* "letting grain

arise" (Ee VII 67). The same split affects anaptyctic vowels in bound forms before enclitic pronouns, with occasional forms such as *riġmašu* "his cry" (Gilg II 221; Assyrian/Babylonian *rigimšu*) in Gilgamesh against more frequent *bukrašu* "his son" (Ee I 15) or *napšatuš* "her throat" (Ee IV 31; cf. bab. *napšassu* Ee IV 18).

A similar distribution is reflected in the use of the terminative (*-iš*) and locative (*-ū*(*m*)) endings. Both remain current in Neo-Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian in forming adverbials from adjectives, as also in the epics, e.g. *pisnuqiš* "like a weakling" (Gilg IV 233). Their use with substantives remains highly marked. Isolated terminatives such as *naburriš* "like a battlement" (Gilg II 41) in Gilgamesh are opposed to more regular usage in Ee, as in *šašmiš itlupu qitrubu tāḫāziš* "joining in strife, approaching battle" (Ee IV 94). The same applies to locatives, as *bītūššu* "in his house" (Gilg I 117); *ašrūššu* "in his place" (Ee VII 40); *libbūkka* "within you" (Ee II 66). While these forms with attached pronouns continue the assimilation of final mimation known from OB, other enclitics are attached to the locative *-ū* alone: *iratūš* "on his breast" (Ee II 43). At least in Ee, the endings are productive and include two variants: the locative-terminative *-ūš*, as *libbūš Tiamat* "inside Tiamat" (Ee V 63); and the terminative adverbial *-aš*, *aḫrâtaš* "later" (Ee II 3; cf. Lambert 2013, 40).

The pronominal system of the two works reflects a similar contrast. Gilgamesh generally displays Middle or Neo-Babylonian forms, with the original dative sg. *šâšu*, f. *šâši*, standing for direct and indirect objects (e.g. *ana šâšu* Gilg XI 294), and plural *šâšunu* (Gilg VI 79). The OB accusative *jâtu/i* is more rarely attested in the same roles (Gilg XI 37; Gilg IX 12) next to *jâši* (e.g. Gilg VII 130; X 151), while the uncontracted 3ms *šuātu* occurs in the epic just once (Gilg IX 196; Ms. D). The pronominal system of Ee is more mixed. Both *šâšu* (Ee I 148; II 34) and *šuātu/i* (Ee II 32; Ee III 36) occur, as well as the plural *šâšun*(*u*) (Ee III 12; Ms. A), apocopating a NB base. Apocopated enclitic pronouns for the 3ms are attested in both, including *qerbūš* "in his midst" (Gilg XI 13 Ms. j; but *qerbūššu* Gilg XI 13 Mss. CW), *iratūš* "on his breast" (Ee II 43); plural *kalī-šun* "all of them" (Gilg VI 160), *riġimšun* "their cry" (Ee I 25); or the object pronoun *-š* in *idabbubūš* "they spoke to him" (Gilg X 250; Ms. K), *ušrabbiš* "she magnified him" (Ee II 34). All forms are much more frequent in Ee, which also includes the 2SM *šaptūk* "your lips" (Ee II 141); 3SF *kabtataš* "her liver" (Ee II 110); 2PM *mārukun* "your son" (Ee III 55); and 3PF *ilšina Ištaršin* "their god, their goddess" (Ee VI 116). While the frequency of use in Ee is unparalleled in the surviving Middle Babylonian literary fragments, they are all attested in the latter and rather faithfully continue early SB usage.

The verbal system of both epics is characterized by the retention of t-stems, including: *tiṣbat* (Gilg IV 243; imperative Gt to *ṣabātu*); *imtaḫṣu* (Gilg XI 132; Gt to *maḫāṣu*); *itlupu* (Ee IV 94; Gt to *elēpu*); *tuštāniḫ* (Ee II 91; $Št_2$ to *anāḫu*). The ŠD-forms are generally attested only in Ee: *lišrabbib* (Ee I 162); *ušraddi* (Ee I 134); *ušmalli* (Ee I 134); *ušrabbišu* (Ee I 148). Importantly, these also reflect the expansion of ŠD-stems first clearly attested in the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser I.

Finally, both epics use apocopated forms of prepositions *an*(*a*) "to, for", *in*(*a*) "in", both regularly assimilated to following consonants, as well as *el*(*i*) "on, above" and the suppletive *elu*: *a–dūru dāri* "forever" (Gilg VII 103; Ms. g); *aš–šâšu-ma* "Gilg X 78; Ms. b); *i–puk*[*ki*] (Gilg I 83); *el-ša* (Ee I 42). Though both are again more frequent in Ee, attestations are also restricted diachronically and contextually. An interpretation as spelling

errors (George 2003, 433) is possible, but the concentration of apocopated *an* in Late or Neo-Babylonian in Gilgamesh manuscripts makes dialectal influence equally plausible. Many attestations are likewise restricted to individual phrases: *elu ṣēri* (Gilg I 136) recurs in the same form in Gilg I 248 and Gilg VI 2; *an ilānī* (Ee V 1) again in apocopated form in Ee V 118, Ee VII 27, and Ee VII 96. Similar to the generic spread of hymnic forms in early SB, this again suggests that the incorporation of stock phrases and formulaic composition influence linguistic form.

Despite the linguistic differences between the two epics, the koineization already suggested can continue to provide a model for the continued evolution of SB. Individual features do point directly to OB predecessors, including the anaphoric *šuātu* in Ee, the prevalence of -*š*D-forms, and the /a/-vocalization of the D- and Š-stems. These features also rather accurately continue forms attested in the early SB of the second millennium. It is difficult to maintain OB as a sole target of emulation. The same conclusion applies to many of the features through which Ee claims its archaizing classicism. Other features, in contrast, including both the nominal and pronominal systems, suggest a living language which asserted its independence from contemporary dialects as a grammatical style while continuing to adapt to its linguistic and cultural setting.

FURTHER READING

A comprehensive grammar of SB is still lacking. Reiner 1966 and Buccellati 1996 both address Standard Babylonian to some degree, though the interest is largely normative. Brief, often conflicting overviews are provided by von Soden 1995, 298–299 § 191; Huehnergard 2005, 595–598; and Streck 2011. Machinist 1978 provides an important study of the Tukultī-Ninurta I epic, Groneberg 1987 a structural description of hymnic morphology and syntax. Stein 2000 covers the Middle and (Early) Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions, Schaudig 2001 the Babylonian inscriptions of Nabonidus and Cyrus. Kouwenberg's (2010) important study on the verbal system also covers developments in SB.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Standardization in Egyptian

Antonio Loprieno

Introduction: Standardization as a Recursive Process

If we wanted to formulate in a nutshell role of standardization (Haugen 1966) in linguistic and literary history, this would be that standardization processes function as the trace of *economy* in language history. The key word is here "economy," which is not meant in the conventional sense of an activity involving transactions of goods, but rather in the etymological sense of securing the "housekeeping," i.e. the good maintenance – we would now speak of "resilience" – of writing and language as cultural institutions in constant need of maintenance. Standardization processes are concerned with linguistic forms, but also affect specific discourse practices (Deumert 2004), because they are meant to reduce the transaction costs arising from the use of language in general. Linguistic and literary interaction (literature being a very representative, and thus culturally loaded discourse) can in fact be seen as operating in a "market" whose agents have a vested interest in reducing the efforts deriving from the need to ensure the effectiveness of the intended written or oral communication. A prototypical example of early standardization in the Egyptian domain is that commemorative and administrative texts always begin with the name of the reigning ruler and the date of composition: *rnp.t-zp X ḫr ḥm n nzw-bỉty Y* "regnal year X under the Majesty of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt Y". In this way, registering and storing them for referral or retrieval becomes less costly or time-consuming.

But standardization cannot be adequately understood without reference to its symmetrical counterpart, which is *differentiation* (or *variation*). Differentiation is in fact the trace of *entropy* in language history, "entropy" being the centrifugal tendency, present in language as in all other information systems, to increase the informational value of a message even at the potential cost of disorder and uncertainty. When the informational costs

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of maintaining a linguistic feature become too high for a majority of its users, they feel that this feature has become inadequate and tend to deviate from the received standard and opt for non-standard features that they perceive as communicatively more powerful. Over time, this increases linguistic differentiation. While standardization, therefore, is a top down phenomenon that aims at reducing the costs of language production, differentiation works bottom up: it privileges individually or socially more expressive linguistic codes, e.g. dialects, over the economic advantages of a standardized language. When a learned scribe of the Nineteenth Dynasty wants to patronize an allegedly less competent colleague, he writes: "As for your utterances, there is no translator who can understand them. They are like the conversation of a Delta man with a man from Elephantine" (pAnastasi I 28,6), thus showing off his competence by echoing the words used by the protagonist of a famous literary text, the tale of Sinuhe, to express his alienation after a dangerous flight while at the same time providing an indirect evidence for the existence of at least two speech communities in Egypt.

Differentiation is the immediate result of linguistic innovation, which is the trace of *typology* in language history. There is only a finite number of possible paths along which linguistic innovation is directed, and these paths are defined by universal rules. For example, it is possible for a language to develop a definite article from a demonstrative pronoun, as in English (modern English "the" < Old English *Pæt* "that") or in Egyptian (Late Egyptian *p3* "the" < Old Egyptian *p3* "this"), whereas the development of a demonstrative pronoun from a definite article is unknown. Thus, language change stems from a continuous sequence of bottom up innovation, competitive differentiation, and top down standardization, which together make out what can be called "language change" (Keller 1994):

LANGUAGE CHANGE = INNOVATION (< TYPOLOGY) → DIFFERENTIATION (< ENTROPY)
→ STANDARDIZATION (< ECONOMY)

But "change" is in fact the steady state of language: it is a recursive cyclical process governed by the Invisible Hand, which frequently blurs the rigid boundaries between these three aspects of language change. With its four millennia of documented language history, Egypt provides an ideal case study to appreciate the universal tendencies and the cultural specificities of standardization processes. But since Ancient Egyptian is only known as a "text language" (Polis 2015), we should keep in mind that our knowledge of non-standard varieties, and especially of the spoken reality, is doomed to remain poor.

Egypt's Language History

The Egyptian language divides into two main stages, called "Earlier Egyptian" and "Later Egyptian," separated by a major typological change from synthetic to analytic patterns. Further historical subdivisions within each of two stages are mainly determined by changes in writing conventions and processes of standardization (Loprieno and Müller 2012).

Earlier Egyptian is the language of all written texts from 3000 BCE to 1400 BCE and survives in formal religious texts down to the third century CE. It is usually subdivided as

follows: (a) *Old Egyptian*, the language of the Early Bronze Age, from 3000–2000 BCE, a centralized period called the "Old Kingdom" followed by a decentralized "First Intermediate Period." The main documents of this stage of the language are funerary texts and biographies with accounts of individual achievements inscribed in the rock-cut tombs of the administrative elite. (b) *Middle (*or *classical) Egyptian*, from the Middle Bronze Age to the early part of the Late Bronze Age, from 2000–1400 BCE, a centralized period called Middle Kingdom, a less centralized Second Intermediate Period, and the first portion of the New Kingdom. Classical Egyptian is the language of religious and literary texts conveying the educational and professional expectations of Egyptian society, as well as of administrative and historical records. (c) *Traditional Egyptian* (often referred to as *égyptien de tradition*), the standardized language of most monumental texts from the Late Bronze Age to the end of the Egyptian writing tradition in Late Antiquity. For more than a millennium, Traditional Egyptian coexisted with the various stages of the later form of the language in a situation of diglossia (Ferguson 1959), maintaining the linguistic structures of the classical language, but displaying, especially in the Hellenistic and Roman period, an expansion of its graphic inventory. Earlier Egyptian is characterized by a preference for *synthetic* grammatical structures: it displayed a full set of morphological suffixes indicating gender and number; it exhibits no definite article; it prefers the VSO order in verbal formations.

Later Egyptian is documented from the Late Bronze Age (the latter portion of the New Kingdom) down to the Middle Ages (1400 BCE–1300 CE). It is further subdivided as follows: (a) *Late Egyptian* (1400–700 BCE), during the late New Kingdom and the so-called "Third Intermediate Period." It possesses a rich literature of wisdom texts and tales, as well as new literary genres, such as mythology or love poetry. Late Egyptian was also the vehicle of bureaucracy, as documented by archives or school texts. It displays varying degrees of interference with the classical language, with the tendency of older or more formal texts, such as historical records or literary tales, to display a higher degree of overlapping than later or administrative texts. (b) *Demotic* (seventh century BCE to fifth century CE) is the language of administration and literature from the Late Period down to late antiquity. Although grammatically close to Late Egyptian, it radically differs from it in its graphic system. Important texts in Demotic, especially during the Hellenistic period, are narrative cycles, moral instructions, and economic and administrative documents. (c) *Coptic* (300–1300 CE), the language of Christian Egypt, was written in a variety of the Greek alphabet with the addition of Demotic signs to indicate Egyptian phonemes absent from Greek. Beginning in the ninth century, Coptic was gradually superseded by Arabic (Richter 2009), but it survived as the liturgical language of the Christian Church and in few traces in Egyptian Arabic. Besides having undergone phonological changes, later Egyptian diverges from earlier Egyptian in its preference for analytic patterns: suffix morphological markers tend to be dropped and replaced by prefix compounds; the demonstrative pronoun "this" and the numeral "one" evolve into the definite and indefinite article; periphrastic SVO patterns supersede VSO verbal forms.

Owing to the centralized nature of the prevailing cultural models in Ancient Egyptian society (Assmann 2003), there is hardly any evidence of dialectal differences in pre-Coptic Egyptian (Winand 2015; Satzinger 2017). Coptic is known through a wide variety of dialects differing primarily in the graphic rendition of Egyptian phonemes, to a lesser extent in morphology, syntax, and lexicon.

It will come as no surprise that in the extremely codified Ancient Egyptian society, standardization phenomena are much more readily identifiable than linguistic variety. The tendency to limit the number of socially accepted linguistic forms and genres, what is often referred to as "decorum" (Baines 1990), inhibited the recognition of linguistic differentiation in Egyptian writing. While standardization phenomena are easy to detect throughout Egyptian history (Assmann 2003), linguistic differentiation is recognizable only in circumscribed periods. On the other hand, standardization and differentiation are usually intertwined in actual language history: for example, the development of orthographic rules corresponds to the presence of centrifugal local or individual varieties; and the promotion of variation to written usage, usually reacts to a standard perceived to have become inadequate. In the case of Ancient Egypt, evidence is doomed to be far richer for diaphasic (contextual) than for diastratic (social) differentiation (Polis 2015).

Establishing the Writing Standard

Standardization always involves the existence of an agency that ultimately prompts the underlying processes. Especially in early cultures, this agency is usually ideological: the adoption or rejection of standardization is tied to sociopolitical processes (Armstrong and Mackenzie 2013). Thus, it is not surprising that the first standardization we encounter in Egyptian language history appears together with the process of state formation (around 3000 BCE) and involves the domain of writing (Regulski 2015).

Creating linguistically meaningful signs out of pictorial representations and organizing them within a system called "hieroglyphic," which is also interpreted as an instrument to capture the very essence, the "sacredness" of the world, was the result of a double standardization (Stauder 2010). The first process concerned the *shape* of signs that originally represented entities of the real world: in their process of transformation into linguistic indicators, they maintained an iconic reference, but adjusted it to the contingencies of the material support and of linear writing. Thus, the formal standardization of hieroglyphic signs obeyed two sets of iconic requirements: (a) the sign should maintain a recognizable *reference* to objects or entities of the real world, i.e. a *connective* iconicity, typically by identifying prototypical features of the represented entity: for example, the word for "house" is expressed by a rectangular perimeter with an entrance in its middle: ; (b) secondly, the sign should convey features that *distinguish* it from similar signs, allowing its disambiguation and immediate identification, even when the disambiguating features lack a real life correspondence, i.e. a *distinctive* iconicity: e.g., the sign for "man" is rendered with a referential hybrid in which the legs are in sitting position, but the arms in running gesture: . In addition, the standardization of signs also involved their calibration, i.e. the reduction or expansion of their actual size to fit the needs of writing sequence: in what may be the first occurrence of the name of the island of Elephantine, the sign of the "elephant" is placed on top of the sign for "mountain", in ostensible disregard of real life dimensions: .

The second standardization process that accompanied the early development of the Egyptian writing system (until 2750 BCE) affected the *function* assigned to each hieroglyph. In this case, the standardization led to a restriction of the *number* and the codification of the *value* of the signs. Of the more than thousand signs that were in use during the First Dynasty, only a few hundred were left at the beginning of the Old Kingdom (Third Dynasty). The linguistic value of the signs was derived from the application of the rebus principle: a sign could be used either to refer to the meaning directly or symbolically evoked by it or to refer to something with which it shared a portion of its phonetic skeleton. Here, the standardization process consisted in gradually limiting the number of rebus options and of conventional sequences of signs.

This graphic standardization made the Egyptian language an instrument of both communication and identity (Polis 2015). After a first phase, which lasted for about two centuries (from 3050–2900 BCE), in which a relatively large set of signs was created and their shape regularized, a second wave of standardization starting in the second half of the First Dynasty and lasting until the end of the Second Dynasty (around 2750 BCE) refined the system by reducing the sign corpus and dismissing a high number of logographic signs (Regulski 2010, 290–293.) Significantly, the standardization of the writing system mirrored the development of centralized political control, and it is not by chance that the Third Dynasty saw the establishment of both state-like institutions and a hieroglyphic system whose inventory and principles were to remain stable for the following two millennia.

One should not, however, overestimate the role of standardization processes in a writing system in which signs continue to keep an immediate iconic content. In such a system, the signs maintain an associative potential that may favor ideologically loaded, non-standard uses. Any writing system, all the more so a pictorial one, displays a visual tension by virtue of which the representational content may give rise to analogical connections between the visual referent and the underlying linguistic reality. Therefore, Egyptian hieroglyphs maintained, in addition to their basic linguistic value, an informational "added value" which was absent from their cursive counterpart, called Hieratic, in spite of the fact that at the beginning of the historical development the distinction between hieroglyphs and Hieratic was only due to the material support – hieroglyphic shapes being linked to the features of stone carving, Hieratic signs to the use of ink and papyrus.

It is important to stress that graphic standardization is always both linguistically and culturally embedded: it is based on conventions that on the one hand imply the presence of language in writing (i.e. the sound and shape of the word), but on the other hand are rooted in patterns of derivation which vary from one culture to the other: a grapheme for "man" is never just a neutral representation of a human being, but is always subject to cultural projections, as is demonstrated by the opposition between Egyptian, Sumerian, Chinese and Mayan rendering of the same real-world referent: , , , .

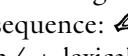
Standardizing the Language

The graphic standardization of the early third millennium BCE was mirrored by a similar process involving the language itself. Until approximately 2750 BCE, Egyptian writing

did not render complete strings of the underlying language, but only proper names and culturally relevant concepts such as "king" or "conquest". The first written sentences appear during the Second Dynasty: the first one is embedded into the royal name: *ḥtp-sḫm.wy* "the Two Powers are pacified", the second one is a seal impression from king Peribsen: *nbwy nbwt ḏ͗i.n-f t3.wy n z3-f nsw-b͗ity Pr-ib-sn* "the Golden God of Naqada has given the Two Lands to his son King Peribsen." In addition to political and administrative requirements, the need to adapt the script to encode continuous speech was probably encouraged by changes in the linguistic environment of Early Dynastic Egypt: together with the graphic norm, we observe a lexical standardization that washes out the original linguistic varieties, traces of which are still kept. For example, the signs of the body parts that have a phonetic value in the hieroglyphic system, such as *d* "hand", *i͗dn* "ear" or *ʿn* "eye", display etymological connections with their Semitic counterparts *yad*, *ʿuḏn* and *ʿayn*. To indicate the body parts themselves, however, these words were replaced by apotropaic periphrases which evoke their functional embedding: "hand" becomes *ḏr.t* "that which seizes"; "ear" is *msḏr* "that on which one rests"; and "eye" is *i͗r.t* "that which acts". These doublets often correspond to two different sets of phonetic correspondences between Egyptian and Semitic (for example, Semitic *q* corresponds in some cases to Egyptian *ḏ*, as in Semitic *waraq* "leaf" and Egyptian *w3ḏ* "papyrus sting", in other cases to Egyptian *ḫ*, as in *w3ḫ* "fertile") and may be the sign of the standardization of one form of the language over other spoken varieties. It cannot be excluded that different forms of Egyptian continued to be spoken in historical times and may have left a trace in the phonetic and morphological differences between earlier and later Egyptian that cannot be explained in typological development (Satzinger 2017), e.g. earlier Egyptian *ʿ3*, later Egyptian *dy* "here", or earlier Egyptian *ḥmʿ* "with", later Egyptian" *i͗rm* "with", lit. "at the side of" (Winand 2015).

With the development of the centralized Old Kingdom administration, hieroglyphs are organized on the writing surface in ideal squares. The same rule applies to cursive Hieratic, which is documented alongside hieroglyphs from the very beginning of the writing system on material supports other than stone.

A Literary Standard

The next standardization takes place at the beginning of the Middle Kingdom, a period of Egyptian history that was programmatically inaugurated by the "renewal of birth," i.e. the restauration of the pristine order after a centrifugal interval (First Intermediate Period, ca. 2150–2000 BCE), under king Amenemhat I (ca. 2000–1975 BCE). The focus of standardization is now the establishment of a specifically *scholarly* variety of the Egyptian language, a standard to be taught in schools and to be used for formal textual genres, ranging from religion to literature. Thus, hieroglyphic texts always display a hierarchy of textual practices (Polis 2015). The process of standardization of the early Middle Kingdom involved both orthography and grammar. As for orthography, standard writings were fixed for the most frequent words, e.g. the verb *sḏm* "to listen" as the sequence: , i.e. <ear> = logogram SḎM "listen" + <owl> = phonetic sign /m/ + lexical classifier <papyrus scroll>. Earlier (or alternative) options included sequences with the phonetic

signs /s/ or /ḏ/ preceding or following the logogram, etc. Also, grammatical innovations in texts from the late Old Kingdom and the First Intermediate Period, such as the sporadic presence of the definite article *p3*, were marginalized in the newly established standard, which for this reason has come to be referred to as "classical Egyptian."

The social power associated with linguistic standardization (Kristensen-Couplan 2011) can be vividly observed at work in the Middle Kingdom: Mentuweser, an official under king Sesostris I, lists among his qualities that justified his career a self-conscious linguistic behavior: "I was one who spoke according to the manner of the officials, refraining from using *p3*" (Loprieno 1996a, 519), thus making clear that avoiding the definite article had become a topical sign of orthodox linguistic, and therefore also good administrative practice. Within the social horizon of the formation of a scholarly standard we can also appreciate the process of standardization that took place in the early Middle Kingdom in the realm of textual genres. It is during this period that two literary genres acquired codified structural features for the rest of Egyptian civilization: the "instruction" (which is defined by the specific Egyptian technical term *sb3.yt*), usually framed as a teaching of wisdom from a superior (father, high official, etc.) to a younger pupil, and the "tale" (most famous in later reception is the "tale of Sinuhe"). Many of these texts display formal features of fiction, such as the colophon (*ỉw-f pw m ḫtp* "the text has reached the end") and acquired "classical" status in the sense that they were copied and transmitted in later periods (Parkinson 2009).

Classical Egyptian Literature

The presence or absence of an Egyptian "literature" in the modern sense is a controversial matter. In the traditional Egyptological approach, literary texts were considered to have a functional setting and to be generally linked to the presentation of the political and educational views of the court; in other words, forms of official or semiofficial propaganda. In the Seventies of the last century, the autonomy of literary discourse as opposed to the functional boundedness of other texts turned into a major scholarly concern. Egyptian literature came to be identified as a group of texts in which features we usually associate with literature, such as a certain degree of fiction or the embeddedness in patterns of reception, were both intended by the ancient writer and his audience and detectable by the modern reader (Loprieno 1996b).

This approach, regardless of the different interpretative stances adopted by scholars, was methodologically rooted in various forms of text theory (Moers 2001). Research in the last twenty years has specified the cultural setting and the technical devices of literary discourse (Parkinson 2009), but it has also brought about a certain reflux: by suggesting a taxonomy of literature based on criteria established by modern literary criticism, Egyptologists may have gone too far, since Egyptian literature is essentially pseudepigraphic and does not know individual authors. Rather, we could define Middle Kingdom literary genres as "cultural texts" (Assmann 1995) conveying a societal self-presentation aimed to be *learnt* rather than an individual self-representation meant to be *enjoyed*. In this perspective, classical Egyptian literary texts are never disconnected from a functional horizon, but act as educational instruments of socially stored knowledge and cultural memory (Assmann 2011).

Standard and Non-Standard

During the Middle Bronze Age, another standardization process took place within Egypt's cultural boundaries. Semitic speaking populations living at the margins of the Egyptian world – such as Bedouins in the Sinai or on military service in the Western desert – developed a restricted form of literacy by standardizing a limited number of Egyptian hieratic signs to express their native Semitic language (Darnell et al. 2005). This process generated the first examples of alphabetic writing, a phenomenon by which the number of rebus options radically downsized through a generalized use of the acrophonic principle:  <head of ox> = Egyptian logogram K3 "cattle", Semitic *'alep* "bull" > /'/;  <house> = Egyptian logogram PR and phonetic sign /pa:r/ "house", Semitic *bayt* "house" > /b/;  <water> = Egyptian phonetic sign /n/, Semitic *maym* "water" > /m/.

Standardization, therefore, does not always correlate with the higher status of the standard as opposed to the non-standard (Goldwasser 2006). While usually linked with socio-political processes, it does not automatically involve the adoption of a more prestigious social norm, but can also prompt the emergence of sub-standard identities in a process of "de-standardization" (Coupland and Kristiansen 2011, 27–33). In the course of time, a linguistic or literary standard can see its higher status neutralized and eventually replaced by an originally lower variety which becomes the new standard ("demotization").

In the three centuries between the end of the Middle Kingdom and the mid-eighteenth Dynasty (1750–1450 BCE), the classical language displays traces of typological evolution (Stauder 2013, 3–55), but continues to be perceived as one standard. Two opposite trends can be observed here: the adoption of vernacular features, particularly in the texts of the Second Intermediate Period, and the recourse to linguistic purism, especially in the time of Hatshepsut and Thutmosis III. The tales of pWestcar, from the early Eighteenth Dynasty, are not written any more in the official language free of definite articles, but in the linguistic heir of the administrative language of the Middle Kingdom.

Globalization and Diglossia

A certain degree of variation between linguistic norms was always present in Egypt and became socially relevant in the Middle Kingdom. Captions containing the workers' speech in Old Kingdom tombs render a distinctly more colloquial language than the ritual scenes in which they are embedded, and private letters or administrative texts from the Middle Kingdom are full of those definite articles (*p3*) from whose use Mentuweser proudly refrained. The very emergence of literature coincided with the overt institutional pressure for the "language of the officials" (*r-ḥ srj.w*) at the top of the cultural hierarchy, while still allowing non-standard varieties in less formal, for example administrative contexts (Milroy and Milroy 1997). Things changed dramatically when Egypt entered what might be called its "globalized era" in the Late Bronze Age, between the fifteenth and the twelfth century BCE.

A typical feature of globalization is bilingualism: the coexistence of a lingua franca for the global domains and of other languages (e.g. "national") for the local use, regardless of social or intellectual stratification. For example, in the so-called Amarna age (1380–1360 BCE), the diplomatic correspondence between Near Eastern rulers took place in Akkadian,

while local languages continued to be used for all textual genres, including literature. In Egypt, the cultural response to an increasingly international culture was the emergence of a particular type of bilingualism which we call "diglossia," i.e. the coexistence of two varieties of the same language in different functional horizons (Fishman 1967). Diglossia triggers a linguistically founded opposition of cultural spheres (for example written vs. oral, official vs. colloquial, religious vs. profane) which breaks a society's linguistic unity, but not its cultural cohesion. Classical Egyptian, which had been treated so far as one written language in spite of differences in registers and typological adjustments, was codified in the form it had reached and standardized for formal, i.e. mainly religious texts down to the end of Egyptian culture (Vernus 2016). In all other domains of life, it was superseded by Late Egyptian.

With the standardization of diglossia, what used to be *one* compact Egyptian linguistic horizon (called *r3 n km.t* "mouth of Egypt" in the Middle Kingdom and *md.t km.t* "word of Egypt" from the Nineteenth Dynasty onward) gives place to an interface between *two* Egyptian languages, both with official status. And interestingly enough, it is the new linguistic standard that is soon adopted for literary purposes, because it optimizes two forms of "translation": the intracultural Egyptian translation of contents into language, and the intercultural translation with the neighboring Mediterranean world. It is not by chance that the first literary text which around 1420 BCE consciously adopts Late Egyptian instead of the classical language is an Egyptian adaptation of a Near Eastern mythological tale (Collombert and Coulon 2000), and that the use of Semitic loanwords words becomes a sign of competence and distinction in Ramesside scribal culture (Winand 2017a). The promotion of Late Egyptian to literary standard shows that standardization represents the levelling of a culturally dominant, but not necessarily socially higher register of the language (Armstrong and Mackenzie 2013, 161–207).

Two Literary Standards

With the choice of Late Egyptian as the linguistic vehicle of literary compositions, Egyptian *belles lettres* (*md.t nfr.t* "good speech", *ṯ3z.w stp.w* "chosen maxims", cf. Moers 2001) come closer to our understanding of this term. During the European Middle Ages, the emergence of "national" literatures coincides with the birth of national identities from the break of the unifying force of the Roman Empire and of Latin as the language of writing. Dante and other authors of early Italian literature wrote both in Latin and in vulgar, but kept the textual spheres in which they were used carefully separated. In other words, they explicitly sanctioned the existence of *two* linguistic standards and *one* cultural identity: in Dante's Italian, "to speak Latin" means "to speak clearly" (Farrell 2001, 1–27). This corresponds closely to what happens in Egypt during the Late Bronze Age: while earlier literature shared the same formal conventions with other texts of official writing, in presence of diglossia between the classical language (as a kind of "Latin") and Late Egyptian (as "vulgar") the choice of language register also discriminates between cultural horizons (Polis 2015).

In Middle Kingdom Egypt, as we saw above, the literary audience had a strong social and linguistic awareness, but there were no formal criteria separating fiction from other spheres of writing, neither the support of the text nor the adopted language. The channels

of distribution of literature were not less subject to control than those governing the diffusion of written culture altogether. This intellectual horizon resisted until the Amarna crisis, which is perhaps the last historical setting in which Egyptian literature, with a king authoring a literary hymn to propagate his religious reform, is closely associated with political loyalism. When diglossia and Late Egyptian are standardized, the situation changes dramatically: literary texts in what has now become the "traditional" language continue to be transmitted (Vernus 2016), but the promotion of entertainment to the sphere of literature also opens the way to a new dialectic with the past (Baines 1989). Ultimately rooted at the linguistic level in the gradual divorce between official and unofficial language, and at the historical level in the challenge represented by Egypt's exposure to a globalized context, this new cultural diglossia remained in place down to the end of the Ancient World, as is shown by the many instances of later Egyptian translations of an earlier Egyptian text (Vernus 1996, 564), including a ritual text in *égyptien de tradition* from the Hellenistic period followed line by line by a Late Egyptian counterpart (pBM 10252) and many priestly decrees from the Hellenistic period such the famous Rosetta Stone, with a classical, a Demotic, and a Greek version of the same text.

Literature in Ramesside Egypt

Egypt now knows two forms of literature. The first is the classical literature of the Middle Kingdom and of the early New Kingdom as transmitted in schools, and therefore promoted to the level of "classical" literature: in the eyes of the New Kingdom reader, the Middle Kingdom authors have become memorable. Proofs of this attitude can be found in the creation of a myth of literary figures of the past, with the mythical Kheti as prototype (Loprieno 1996a, 522). The nameless authors of classical literary works, who had been vehicles of societal knowledge, have now turned into paradigmatic examples of authorship, as documented by a wide array of cultural signs: a Ramesside tomb relief (known as Fragment Daressy) depicts classical authors and sages of the past, and a famous school text bemoans the inferiority of contemporary authors when compared with their classical antecedents (pChester Beatty IV):

> "Is there here one like Hardjedef, another like Imhotep?
>
> None of our contemporaries is like Neferty or Khety, the most prominent among them.
>
> It is enough to mention the names of Ptahemdjehuty or of Khakheperreseneb!
>
> Is there another like Ptahhotep, or equally of Kaires?"

The actual transmission of these classical texts follows rather inhomogeneous philological paths at the crossroads of production and reproduction (Winand 2017b). On the one hand, the original text is supposed to be adhered to and copied "as it was found in writing" (*mỉ gm.yt m sḫ3*), especially when stemming from the religious sphere; on the other hand, Egyptian philology shows ample evidence of willful intervention on the original, spanning from the substitution of obsolete words to the modernization of grammatical constructions, with sporadic Late Egyptian interferences. Other forms of philological intervention on the original text include the addition of words or morphemes aimed at

improving its comprehension, and in some cases even the rewriting of passages for ideological purposes, as in the case of the "Loyalist instruction" (Verhoeven 2009).

But a society with a sense of classicism is also one in which there is a form of dialectics between received and produced culture; where there are *scriptores classici*, there are also *scriptores proletarii* (I use these two terms in Aulus Gellius' technical sense, Martindale 2010, 310–311). And indeed, Ramesside Egypt experiences a considerable expansion of its literary scope. The result of diglossia is a new literature of entertainment (*sḫmḫ-ib*), which does not use the classical language, but the new linguistic register. The social diglossia between "official" and "unofficial" has been replaced by a cultural diglossia between "perishable" and "imperishable". From now on, there are two literary standards: the tales and wisdom texts in Traditional Egyptian as copied and transmitted in schools, and the literature of entertainment in Late Egyptian. The latter is used for new literary genres that develop out of formerly non-literary textual forms: autobiographies, for example, have exhausted their original function and now display explicit fictional features, as shown by the intertextually powerful incipit of the autobiography of Samut called Kiki: *sꜣ pw wnn.w s3-mw.t rn-f* "Once upon a time there was a man whose name was Samut", which echoes the classical tale of the Eloquent Peasant (Loprieno 1996a, 523); or the role of the dream in providing a context for asserting one's own personal piety. The new literature of entertainment is now enriched by new genres such as love poetry and harpers' songs, in which the pseudepigraphic functional setting in the tomb of a mythical king Antef (Assmann 1977) can be compared to the narrative frame of Middle Kingdom tales or instructions.

Entertainment literature framed as travel report (such as Wenamun and the Tale of Woe) provides another example of the emergence of literature out of functional settings such as administrative reports or letters. Unlike classical literature with its fictional frame as autobiography, as instruction, or as tale, Late Egyptian literary texts do not need any reference to a purported functional context. This shows that classical authors were much more bound to cultural conventions than those of Late Egyptian texts, whose work is not exposed to the same cultural filters and is, therefore, closer to a literature free of sociopolitical control.

New Graphic Standards in the Iron Age

After three centuries of foreign domination and reduced literary activity during the Iron Age (Third Intermediate Period, ca. 1050–700 BCE), a new process of standardization affects Egypt's linguistic and literary landscape during the seventh century BCE. As in the formative period of the Egyptian state around 3000 BCE, this process now covers the sphere of writing rather than language. It consists in a radical reform of the cursive writing system which started in the Delta and was adopted at the national level a century later. While Hieratic was always a cursive rendition of a potential hieroglyphic text, maintaining an immediate connection between each sign and the hieroglyph original, the new system, called "Demotic," abandons the iconic immediacy of the pictogram, reduces the number of signs and ligatures and establishes new relations between the sign, which is usually derived from a hieratic sign group, and its linguistic value. Linguistically, Demotic is a more modern form of Late Egyptian (Vernus 1990), but this relatively minor linguistic evolution is accompanied by a dramatic graphic change, which adopts a completely different

philosophy of writing, which moves away from the logographic toward an "alphabetic" system. Egyptian diglossia is now accompanied by digraphia.

This new standard optimizes transaction costs in that it facilitates cultural translation. The drift between Traditional Egyptian and the language of daily culture now requires a reinterpretation and adaptation to the cultural needs of the present: in the Ritual for Repelling Evil (pBM 10252), which – as we saw above – contains a translation of the text from the classical language into Late Egyptian, this procedure is labeled *wḫꜥ*, the same term used throughout Egyptian civilization to refer to a broad spectrum of competences ranging from "interpreting" foreign languages (*wḫꜥ mdw.w n ḫ3s.wt nb*) to "unraveling" literature (*wḫꜥ ṯss.t* or *wḫꜥ md.t*), and generally to "explaining": *wḫꜥ ỉtn.w m ḏn.wt mỉ ỉr sn* "someone who can explain the difficult passages in the annals like the one who composed them."

While it does not affect literature until the Ptolemaic period, the wisdom text of pBrooklyn 47.218.135 and the tale of Merire and King Sisobek (pVandier) being still written in Hieratic well after Demotic had emerged as administrative script, the switch to Demotic marks nonetheless the end of the distinction between a "classical" and a "proletarian" literature and its replacement by a different model of cultural reception: past and present are not any more dialectically linked by *classicism*; rather, the past can only be retrieved by means of *archaism*, which implies a form of canonization of cultural memory (Loprieno 2003). In the tomb of the Late Period official Ibi (TT 36), for example, portions of the biographical text are borrowed from parallels from the Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period, and some scenes are directly inspired by the decoration of a tomb from the late Old Kingdom belonging to a man who bore the same name (Moreno Garcia 2012).

Interestingly enough, the end of the reception of classical authors is concomitant with the end of proletarian literature in Late Egyptian, of which pVandier is the last witness. When literature resumes its productive course in Ptolemaic times, this time it is in Demotic and based on a different forms of diglossia: not any more a dialectic between classical and Late Egyptian, but one between the hieroglyphic "divine script" (*sḫ3 n mdw.w-nṯr*) of the religious sphere and the Demotic "administrative script" (*sš šꜥ.t*) of worldly matters; it is not any longer an interface between past and present texts, but one between inherited literary forms and new Hellenistic genres: the philosophical dialogue, the epic cycle, the oracle.

Hellenistic Egypt

The systemic divorce between monumental and cursive writing marked by the emergence of Demotic eventually also affects the sphere of hieroglyphs. When the manual style frees itself from its pictographic origins and its iconic ties, hieroglyphs, antithetically, gradually rediscover the encyclopedic potential of the pictographic sign. In Traditional Egyptian of Hellenistic and Roman Egypt (Engsheden 2016), two of the basic conventions of hieroglyphic writing that had been in place for two and a half millennia are now radically challenged:

a. the values ascribed to a certain number of hieroglyphs is expanded on the basis of their iconic or phonetic associations: for example, the sign of the scarab , which in the classical system only functioned as logogram ḪPR "scarab" or, via rebus, as triconsonantal

phonogram (most typically in the verb *ḫpr* "to become"), acquired a variety of other values derived from shifting the focus to the features of the depicted entity (for example *t3* "earth") or to the phonetic inventory (for example *ḫ* or *ḫp*, which represent the acrophonic value /ḫ/ or the main consonants /ḫ-p/ of the word *ḫpr*);

b. the set of hieroglyphic signs is dramatically increased by manipulating the system at the level of the iconic implications of the sign itself: for example, a mummy coming out of an entrance, a sign unknown in the classical system , acquires the value *pr m ḥrw* "coming forth by day", a quality of the deceased for whom the funerary rite is performed (Philae III, 80, Meeks 2017). In other words: new contents are developed out of old forms, but also new forms out of old contents.

A striking aspect of the simultaneous presence of digraphia hieroglyphs vs. Demotic and bilingualism Egyptian vs. Greek in Hellenistic Egypt is the break of the tie between language and writing that had previously characterized Egyptian culture. Unlike syllabic cuneiform, which was applied to a number of Near Eastern languages of the Bronze and Iron Age (Akkadian, Hittite, Hurrian, Ugaritic, Elamite, Old Persian), and also unlike alphabetic Aramaic, Greek, Latin, or Arabic scripts, which were eventually adopted for the indication of unrelated languages, Egyptian writing was never used before this cultural break for the notation of other languages, except sporadic phrases in other languages, e.g. Cretan, for magical purposes in "the era of globalization" during the Late Bronze Age (Kyriakidis 2002). In the Late Period, examples of the break of the cohesive unity of Egyptian language and writing become ubiquitous: Egyptian can be used side by side with other languages, for instance Aramaic (Vittmann 1993), on funerary stelae; both varieties of the Meroitic script, used in the kingdom of Meroe (present-day Sudan) derive from an Egyptian model; Demotic can be used to write an Aramaic text (such as pAmherst, probably stemming from the Phoenician cultic context); and a few religious texts are written in Demotic script but in classical Egyptian (Smith 1977). Precisely because of the break of the traditional unity of language and writing, the past is not any more a classical model for the present, but, in order to be actualized, needs the process of interpretation (*wḫʿ*) referred to above. This is the same exegetic process which, when aimed at retrieving the past by means of archaism, prompts the Ptolemaic *hierogrammateus* who composed the text of the Rosetta Stone to reinterpret the contemporary Greeks (called in Demotic *wynn* "Ionians") as the ancestral *ḫ3.w-nb.w* "foreigners from the Mediterranean", a term that since the Old Kingdom indicated the mythical inhabitants of the regions north of the Nile delta. Late Period archaism circumvents history precisely because, in a multicultural perspective (Tait 1992), it perceives it all the more strongly.

Epilogue

In the subsequent history of Egypt, which is both multicultural and multilingual (Papaconstantinou 2010; Depauw 2012), the forms of standardization we have observed during the Bronze and Iron Age were followed by other processes involving once again

language and writing: through the Christianization of the country, writing the Egyptian language in an alphabet derived from Greek – a practice that had sporadically existed since the Ptolemaic period whenever the need for disambiguating Demotic script was felt, e.g. in magical spells – was standardized in the stage of the language we call "Coptic"; and after the conquest by 'Amr ibn al-'As in 641 CE Arabic gradually replaced Coptic as a spoken language, the last example of productive bilingualism being a Coptic Grammar written in Arabic around 1300 (Sidarus 2001).

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CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

The "Influence" of Sumerian on Hittite Literature

Mark Weeden

Influence and Contact

The question of influence between literatures should be subjected to some critical review. To speak of one literature associated with one area influencing the literature of another area might carry the assumption that there is an imbalance of power between the two in some respect, that may be expressed in terms of prestige, social domination or colonisation. According to colonial-style thought the literature that delivers the influence might be thought of as active and originating, while the one that receives the influence is supposed to be passive and receptive. "Influence" is thus a concept that one needs to treat with care, along with the closely related concepts of core and periphery, which presuppose in their most unreflected forms a unidirectional processing of information from a culturally high-standing core area towards a culturally low-standing periphery, where the message and content of the material is in some sense diluted or misunderstood.

One methodological precaution that can be taken to prevent falling into traps associated with the notion of influence is to look at the way people have worked with literary material first and foremost from the perspective of local cultural norms, to try to understand specific literary forms on their own terms before appealing to explanations that invoke an outside agency or a derivation from an august tradition hallowed by its ancient sanctity. This involves looking at the use of literature as a social activity, embedded in a particular society at a particular time and place, perpetrated by particular agents with specific group interests which are hardly ever to be defined in terms of ethnic categories. It also involves recognizing that all literature, as indeed all social activity, is in some sense hybrid, and that a pure type that is essentially characteristic of the people who lived in a particular area at the same time is unlikely to be found, even if the literature of the place

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and time specifically invokes such thematic categories as its derivation from ancient tradition and its preservation and transmission of special knowledge that is peculiar to a specific group of people. For an entry to theoretical consideration of ideas related to hybridity and influence, albeit applied to very different areas of research, the reader is referred in tokenistic fashion to the work of Homi Bhabha (e.g. 1994, 110–112) and Monica Fludernik (1998); for hybridity in literature and culture through history see Amar Acheraïou (2011, 13–50), and specifically with reference to Sumerian literature see Gonzalo Rubio (2016).

If we consider the question of influence or contact between Sumerian and Hittite cuneiform literary traditions we are confronted by a major problem. It is highly unlikely that any Hittite understood the Sumerian language in anything even closely resembling its spoken form. Therefore there is no possibility that a context for literary contact such as existed between Arabic and Hebrew in medieval Spain (Drory 1993), or between Greek and Latin in the late Roman Republic (Kaimio 1979; Hutchinson 2013) existed in any sense. There is no way in which Sumerian in Hittite Anatolia (ca. 1600–1200 BC) was ever a language of administration (as Arabic was in Spanish Al-Andalus) or a language of active literary endeavour as Arabic was in the medieval period and Greek was in the late Roman Republic. However, the Hittites adopted the cuneiform script for their own use, and the cuneiform script they used was populated by word-signs that were Sumerian in origin, just as Akkadian was written using Sumerian word-signs in Mesopotamia (Marquardt 2011; Weeden 2011). It is not clear, however, whether the identity of the language from which these logographic writings stemmed was known to Hittite scribes, as they nowhere mention its name. Occasional phonetic writings of Sumerographic phrases show that some of the scribes must have known how some of the signs were supposed to be pronounced, but I think these are relatively few by comparison to other cuneiform writing traditions that tend to write Sumerograms phonetically rather than logographically. At any rate, the use of Sumerographic writings of words, which is a feature of most cuneiform during the second and first millennia BC, will not be discussed any further here, where the concern is rather with texts in the Sumerian language and any types of contact there may have been between these and those of the Hittites.

The status of Sumerian in the Late Bronze Age

It is unclear when Sumerian died out as a spoken language, but almost certainly it was either before or around the time that the vast majority of Sumerian literary texts were written down as exercises in Old Babylonian school-environments during the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries BCE (Woods 2006; Sallaberger 2011). Aside from its use to write Akkadian words logographically, by the late Old Babylonian period Sumerian had become not just a language of learning, but was verging on becoming a language of the obscure, a language which had been revealed to learned people to keep them separate from the rest of humanity, the impenetrable language of the gods. Two Mesopotamian scholastic compositions of the second millennium BCE make this view clear. The composition referred to by modern academics as *The Scholars of Uruk* tells us how the god of wisdom sent out a sage to take "the scribal art" to Uruk and "gave birth to much Sumerian in the hearts of my men" (George 2009, 89, l. 48). Sumerian by the time of this composition is so far

removed from being a spoken vernacular, that its existence cannot be conceived without writing (George 2009, 110–111).

Another somewhat esoteric work (*KAR* 4 rev. 20; Ebeling 1919, 8) tells us how the world was divided into the learned (*ummânu ana ummâni*) and the stupid (*nû'u ana nû'i*). This is part of a bilingual Sumerian–Akkadian creation myth which appears in the position where a translation or explanation would usually be placed in the right hand column of the Syllable Alphabet A, the first cuneiform syllable-forming exercise many scribes would ever have learned (Cavigneaux and Jaques 2010). By this time in the late second millennium BCE most lexical lists were provided with explanatory columns, which may make sense if you have a list of meaningful words or signs for the explanations to correspond to on the left hand side, but seems obscure for Syllable Alphabet A, which mostly consists of allegedly meaningless sounds and syllables, as well as a few personal names. This brief creation story has been referred to as a charter myth for the scribal caste (Cavigneaux and Jaques 2010, 10–11). The insertion of this myth into the explanatory column of a lexical list learned by beginner scribes, which otherwise consists of repeated sounds and occasional names, indicates heremeneutic associations with the material of learning, with what J. Cale Johnson has called the "infrastructure" of scholarship (Johnson 2015; Johnson and Geller 2015, 31).

The Hittites do not seem to have used Syllable Alphabet A in scribal education, although there is possibly one fragment that may be related, and indeed may belong to the more advanced Syllable Vocabulary A, in which the meaningless syllabic sounds arranged for practice in Syllable Alphabet A were given speculative meanings (Farber 1999, 127; Scheucher 2012, 351). In fact recent studies have shown that the preserved Hittite lexical material, as used for scribal education in Mesopotamia, for the large part belonged to the advanced spectrum of the Mesopotamian curriculum (Scheucher 2012), although indirect evidence indicates that they do seem to have been aware of some of the more elementary exercises (Klinger 2005, 112–113; Weeden 2011, 92). There are none of the typical practice tablets known from Mesopotamian school contexts found in the temple and palace archives of the Hittite capital. This could conceivably be an accident of discovery, meaning the scribal education might have happened elsewhere and only the most accomplished products were transferred to the archive or library. However, this would presuppose a use of cuneiform in domestic contexts, which does not seem to correspond to the overall picture we have of cuneiform at Hattusa, where it seems to be largely restricted to use by scribes in the service of the ruling family, who curated collections which had developed to cater to the protection of their masters from impurity and the justification of their actions in the eyes of the gods (van den Hout 2005; Weeden 2011b).

This social context of Hittite cuneiform writing, which seems with few exceptions not to have been used for personal economic purposes such as on a large portion of the documentation from Mesopotamia, should have some repercussions for our perception of the kind of social activity that is subsumed under Hittite cuneiform writing (Weeden 2011b). Some modern scholars point to an apparent division of labour among Hittite scribes (van den Hout 2015; slightly differently Gordin 2015, 355). Only a professional elite among the scribal guild may have been concerned with composing or altering texts of learning, while others were concerned with the lugubrious and tedious tasks of actually writing the texts out on tablets. If such a division existed, we might a priori assume, subject to further

research, that those scribes who belonged to the category that we might reify as being "scholars" rather than "clerks" might have been interested in similar hermeneutic procedures as were their Mesopotamian counterparts. These frequently involved the use of Sumerian, accessed from the lexical lists, as a hermeneutical key to understanding omens, where the positive or negative outcomes of events are inscribed by the gods in the fabric of the world, and traditional literature, which formed the basis for interpreting and guiding the behaviour of human beings, frequently using similar hermeneutic procedures with Sumerian at their base (For such scholarly procedures in first millennium BC Mesopotamia see Frahm 2011). While this assumption seems a priori quite likely given some of the other contexts mentioned above, it is not a field on which much research has been done, and it does in fact militate against certain common assumptions concerning the reception of Mesopotamian traditional literature at Hattusa, namely that Hittite scribes misunderstood and wrongly transmitted the material that they had inherited from the Mesopotamian literary tradition. These assumptions need to be questioned (Veldhuis 2014a, 29).

In the following we will look at the various types of Sumerian-language documents that are available from Boğazköy-Hattusa and consider what they were used for and what evidence there may be for there being any kind of connection between these and Hittite language texts from the same site. We shall then consider some examples of Hittite language texts which have been identified as having a close connection with Sumerian texts from Mesopotamia and look at how this might have been conveyed.

The Use of Sumerian Texts at Hattusa

A thorough presentation and selective analysis of the number of texts on tablets found at Hattusa that contain Sumerian literary material, excluding lexical lists, has been provided by M. Viano in the framework of a study on the reception of Sumerian Literature in the "western periphery" (Viano 2016). This study sought to investigate the streams of transmission through which Sumerian literature reached Hattusa using methods of palaeographic and orthographic analysis. The majority of the Sumerian literary tablets, 35 of them, contain incantations, sometimes whole collections of them. There is some debate as to whether incantations should be termed literary or not, given that these are essentially use-oriented compositions and that they received different ancient genre specifications (e.g. én, "incantation") to various types of composition more traditionally associated with what we call literature today (e.g. sìr, "song"). However, Sumerian incantations from Mesopotamia typically contained historiolae of a narrative type which are used to explain and guarantee the efficacy of the incantation (George 2016, 12). Mostly there is little or no trace of the mythological narratives contained therein in other, more formal literature, which may be an indication that they belong to either a more popular and separate narrative register or an older one. However, the quantity of these types of texts in the total of tablets containing Sumerian language material outside of the lexical lists at Hattusa certainly warrants that one discuss them under the rubric of Sumerian literature at Hattusa.

The tablets of the archives at Hattusa are written in different styles of cuneiform. Hittite cuneiform as written at Hattusa has a distinctive character and can be broadly dated according to the sign-forms it uses to an older period (late sixteenth to late fifteenth centuries), a middle period (late fifteenth to mid fourteenth century) and a late period

(mid fourteenth to ca 1200 BCE). There are also tablets found at Hattusa which are written entirely in foreign styles of cuneiform and may well have been imported, or written by foreign scribes in Hattusa. In the case of the Sumerian language tablets these "foreign" tablets can be divided, according to Viano (2016, 133–135), into those which have a Babylonian-style script, or those which appear to be written in script-types that derive from the closely related styles known from the northern Mesopotamian Late Bronze Age imperial centres of Mittani and Assyria.

On the basis of the script, tablet format, and above all of the spelling conventions, Viano plausibly suggested that a small group of tablets given the Hittitological catalogue number CTH 800 (Laroche 1971), which contain Sumerian incantations, belonged to the oldest stratum of Sumerian at Hattusa (Viano 2016, 229–235). He compared spelling conventions from northern Babylonian centres such as Me-Turan (Tell Haddad) on the Diyala river (2016, 146–228). Viano convincingly shows that the group of Boğazköy tablets showing this Late Old Babylonian writing style must have come from a northern Babylonian scribal milieu rather than those connected to Nippur in southern Mesopotamia. One tablet in particular (KUB 30.1) shows a variant form of an incantation that is also attested at Me-Turan (Viano 2016, 232–233). Physical format and layout are often good indicators of transmissional context, so I would emphasise that this fragment from Boğazköy shows a particular similarity in format and spelling, but not in content, to a tablet in the Manchester Museum which is supposed on the basis of its writing style to come from the Sippar region and date to the Late Old Babylonian period (MMUM 35516+, Alster 1992). Viano's more speculative proposal (2016, 235) that the group of tablets was picked up along with specialists in exorcism (*āšipū*) by Mursili II in the course of his campaign to Babylon (1595 BCE) is to be regarded with caution, although it is an attractive suggestion. Certainly one should imagine the tablets coming with Babylonian scholars who knew how to read them. Whether this needed to be through conquest or not is a different matter.

Despite the difficulties in distinguishing Old and Middle Babylonian palaeography, i.e. in telling the difference between tablets written roughly in the first half of the second millennium BCE from those of the second half of the same millennium in the area of central Mesopotamia, this group of tablets is likely to be the oldest stratum of Sumerian language texts found at Hattusa and consequently the tablets on which they are written are also broadly speaking among the oldest cuneiform material from the Hittite capital. Most of the tablets from this group that have find-spots were also found in the archives on the citadel at Hattusa, Büyükkale, where one sometimes finds older and selective copies of texts, as opposed to the archive of the House on the Slope and the tablet deposits in the magazines of Temple 1 in the Lower City, where later and multiple copies of tablets tend to be found.

As we will discuss in more detail below, Christopher Metcalf has successfully made the point that Hittite scholars actively sought out and adapted Mesopotamian literary material that was relevant to their own interests (Metcalf 2015a). This perspective runs counter to the view that Hittite Anatolia was a passive recipient of Mesopotamian cultural material that radiated out to the west and north in a pre-packaged form. What would have been the relevance of this collection of incantations, however? The heavily phonetically written Sumerian could have been used to learn cuneiform, perhaps, but it is difficult to see how this would have been achievable without having the logographically written Sumerian to

compare it with. It can only really have been an interest in specific magical practices which motivated this act of collection. One of the frequently recurring motifs, not only in this group but in many of the later groups of Sumerian incantations found at Boğazköy, is the historiola of Marduk and Ea, usually referred to as the Marduk-Ea formula, which often appears in an abbreviated form (George 2016, 2–4). Marduk (Sumerian Asalluhi) notices the manifestation of an illness or a case of demonic possession and goes to ask Ea (Sumerian Enki) what to do about it. Ea tells him that he knows the solution already and there frequently follows an instruction for treatment or an incantation. This Marduk-Ea formula is not found at all in Hittite literature to my knowledge, although it is relatively frequently attested in the Sumerian tablets from Boğazköy. There is thus no sense in which we can talk of a transfer of this particular literary/magical motif from Sumerian to Hittite.

Some elements of magical practice from the incantation, particularly alleged acts of witchcraft that the exorcist seeks to defend the patient against, are also found in Hittite anti-witchcraft ritual texts: the evil eye (Mouton 2010, 111), the making of a figurine (Mouton 2010, 114–115). It seems unlikely that these elements of imagined ritual practice in Anatolia owe their origin to these Sumerian incantations, as they are universal expressions of anxiety about the powers imagined enemies might be conjuring against one (Miller 2010). D. Schwemer has argued that Hittite scribes looked for ritual and magical tablets when the local tradition seemed lacking in a particular regard. Thus they did not import building rituals, of which they had many local ones, but they did import medical prescriptions (Schwemer 2013, 164).

Incantations using motifs such as the evil eye, but also the Marduk-Ea formula, continued to be imported into Hattusa not only from Babylonia but also from Mittani and Assyria. There are also examples that were written in the typical Hattusa form of cuneiform script. Clearly Hittite scribes were writing this material down for some reason, possibly educational, depending on the specialism of a foreign scholar who might have been educating Hittite ones, although this does not have to exclude an interest in their practical use (Schwemer 2013, 158). The later tablets mostly come from the areas of northern Syria and Mesopotamia in which first the Mittanian and then later the closely related Assyrian form of the cuneiform script were used, although a precise localisation is not possible Viano 2016, §5.2). They include bilingual fragments with Akkadian translations and are also often in a more standard orthographic Sumerian rather than the heavily phonetic versions referred to above. It is thus possible that they played something of a role in scribal education, as they had a little more resemblance to the kind of Sumerian words that Hittite scribes would actually need to write as logograms, although this a priori assumption does not seem to fit the actually attested evidence very well. However, it is also quite possible that the function of these texts by this time at Hattusa was something related to learning, but of a much more erudite and scholastic nature.

Sumerian Literary Texts at Hattusa

Eight Sumerian literary compositions are attested on tablets found at Hattusa which are also known from Mesopotamia as well as from the north Syrian centres of Emar and Ugarit (Viano 2016, 133). By contrast to the previous category, incantations, none of the

12 tablets containing Sumerian literary compositions found at Hattusa has a clearly identifiable non-Boğazköy script-type. In fact one duplicate manuscript of the composition known as *The Message of Ludingira to his Mother* is found in Ugarit in a trilingual ([Sumerian] – Phonetic Sumerian – Akkadian – Hittite) version written in the typically Hittite style of cuneiform, which is not normal at Ugarit otherwise, and was presumably imported from Hattusa or written there by a scribe trained in Hattusa (Viano 2016, 256–265). The tablets all date to the thirteenth century BCE on the basis of palaeography and are with the exception of one prism written in columns, like lexical lists, maximally containing orthographic Sumerian, phonetic Sumerian, Akkadian and Hittite versions. However, many of the manuscripts are very fragmentary and it is not always possible to tell if they contained particular columns or not. Most of the tablets date from early excavations during which find-spots were not recorded. See Table 27.1.

The collection seems to be rather random at first sight, and one view holds that Hittite scribes were using this material for advanced school-related learning purposes, with little understanding of the content or interest in the functional aspect of the texts concerned (Klinger 2010, 339). Two of the compositions (Edubba E and the Letter of Lugal-Ibila) are concerned with school-life, it is true. Most of the tablets are unfortunately so fragmentary that it is difficult to say anything coherent about them, apart from that the Hittite scribes and scholars either had a very poor grasp of Sumerian, or that they were doing something fundamentally other with these texts than trying to copy them out and reproduce them as versions of Mesopotamian originals.

The evidence is scant, but it is interesting that two of the manuscripts of the Hymn to the storm-god (Sumero-Akkadian Iškur-Adad) came from the House on the Slope in the Lower City (Viano 2016, 133). This contrasts with the find spots of the majority of the incantations mentioned above, which were found in the archives in Building A of the palace on Büyükkale, the citadel of Hattusa, where library or archive single copies of compositions often tended to be kept. The storm-god (Hittite Tarhunna) was the chief god of

Table 27.1 Sumerian Literary Texts found at Hattusa, after Viano 2016, 133 (see for detail).

Composition	*Manuscripts*	*Known find-spots*	*Languages*
Hymn to Iškur-Adad	4	2 from House on the Slope	Sumerian, Phonetic Sumerian, Akkadian, Hittite
Message of Ludingira	3	1 from Ugarit	(Sumerian), Phonetic Sumerian, Akkadian, Hittite
Edubba E	1	?	Sumerian, Phonetic Sumerian, (Akkadian), (Hittite?)
Nergal D	1	?	Sumerian (Akkadian)
Hymn to Nergal?	1	?	Sumerian, Akkadian
Unidentified Hymn to Nanna?	1	?	Phonetic Sumerian
Letter of Lugal-Ibila to Lugal-Nesag (prism)	1	?	Sumerian, (Akkadian)
Dumuzi-Text	1	Büyükkale (citadel) A	Sumerian, Akkadian

the Hittite pantheon, so it is unsurprising that Hittite scholars were interested in tablets of compositions in his honour. Among the manuscripts of the Hymn to the storm-god one provides us with the only example found thus far of a bilingual Sumerian – Hittite manuscript (KUB 4.5). The majority of bilingual tablets are Sumerian – Akkadian, and trilingual Sumerian – Akkadian – Hittite are also found. This manuscript may thus give us an interesting insight into what Hittite scribes were doing with the Sumerian version of this composition beyond its mediation through the language of Akkadian, which was better known at the time. Of course, one cannot exclude that the Akkadian version was in some manner orally added, but it is interesting that this manuscript was made at all and it does seem that the translator is here working directly from the Sumerian rather than an Akkadian intermediary, although given the fragmentary nature of the preservation this is a tentative supposition. A further tablet (KBo 12.72, 9'-12') in fact partly contains an Akkadian version of the same passage, but this does not seem to have necessarily played a role in producing the Hittite "translation".

KUB 4.5 (Schwemer 2001, 193; Klinger 2010, 319–320; Metcalf 2015b, 88; Viano 2016, 255–256):

9′	ki-bi lu-na-me	*nu-uš-ši* LÚ-*tar-š*[*i-it*]
10′	in-pa-a-da	*Ú-UL ku-iš-ki š*[e_{20}-*ek-ki*]
11′	en-na tù-uš-ka-ra	EN-*aš li-li-wa-an-za d*[*am-me-tar*]
12′	giri$_{17}$-za-al iš-kur	*me-ek-ki me-mi-iš-kat-t*[*a*]
No-one reveals his location, the lord Iškur who dwells in a[bundance]		No one k[nows?] his manliness the swift lord … promised much ab[undance]

In this part one has an equivalence between (Phonetic) Sumerian lu-na-me (= orthographic Sumerian lú-na-me = "no-one") and the logographic writing in the Hittite column LÚ-*tar-š*[*i-it*] = *pesnatarsit* = "manliness". The meaning "no-one" is given in the Hittite by *Ú-UL ku-iš-ki*, but it is hard to doubt that the LÚ-*tar-š*[*i-it*] has been formed as a reflection on the construction of the Sumerian lu-na-me. Phonetic lu (orthographic lú) corresponds to Hittite logographic LÚ (= *pesna-* "man"). Sumerian na-me in fact includes a particle na which can be used as a negative under certain syntactic circumstances, together with the copula -me, but it looks as though the Hittite interpreter has run the two elements together and produced the Sumerian abstract prefix nam-, which in Hittite corresponds on the level of one to one equation with the Hittite abstract suffix –*atar*, which is represented by the phonetic complement –*tar* (Metcalf 2015b, 48 fn. 53). Thus the Sumerian lu-na-me is in fact reproduced twice in the Hittite, once as a translation (*Ú-UL ku-iš-ki*), once as a speculative etymological interpretation (LÚ-*tar-š*[*i-it*]). The Sumerian ki-bi, "his location", on the other hand is not reproduced in the Hittite at all. Do we book this as a mistake on the part of the Hittite scribe? Or do we recognise that their interest in this passage may have been a different one to that which we assume to be the function of accurate translation? Speculative etymology is a frequently encountered phenomenon in Babylonian scholarship, and there is no substantial reason why the Hittites should not also have been engaging in it. Here the logographically written phrase arrived at by the process of speculative etymology, *pesnatar* "manliness, manly deeds", is a concept

well known from Hittite royal ideology, given that the Hittite king's exploits are referred to as his "manliness". Possibly we should conceive of this process as one of selection and exclusion, rather than as misunderstanding and omission in translation.

The next lines also present numerous problems, which are usually seen as misinterpretations of a lost orthographic Sumerian column. The Sumerian giri$_{17}$-zal seems to correspond to *memiskatt*[*a*], "promised (lit. Spoke)", meaning that the polyphonous Sumerian sign KA has here been interpreted as Sumerian enim = "word" rather than giri$_{17}$ = "nose", both of which can be written using that same single sign (Klinger 2010, 321). One should also note that the writing KA-zal (= giri$_{17}$-zal) occurs in a significant context in the Hurro-Hittite *Song of Going Forth*, where it may be a writing for the storm-god (van Dongen 2012, 73-74; Metcalf 2015b, 88). One should also note that *iš-kur* could be read as Akkadian *izkur* "he spoke", the exact equivalent of Hittite *memiskatta*.

The primary meaning of giri$_{17}$-zal in Sumerian, however, is "joy, abundance", literally "having a shiny nose", corresponding to the restored Hittite word *dammetar* "abundance", which is restored on the basis of the duplicate manuscript with the Akkadian version (KBo 12.72, 11'-12'), which reads *ša ina hegalli ašbu* "who dwells in abundance". The Hittite word for "joy" is *tuskaratt-*. Is it a coincidence that the Sumerian word preceding giri$_{17}$-zal is spelled tù-uš-ka-ra? The conventional understanding of this writing assumes that it is a mis-spelling for Sumerian dúr ĝar-a, "who founds (his cultic) seat", which it may well be, given that the same Hittite cuneiform sign could correspond to Sumerian dúr or tuš (e.g. Viano 2016, 256). It cannot be excluded, however, that it is a re-interpretation on the basis of the homophony of a Hittite word with the meaning of the following Sumerian word as well as of the polyphony of the cuneiform sign KU = dúr or tuš. The polyphony of KA = enim "word" or giri$_{17}$ "nose" also seems to be being exploited. In the Hittite column on our bilingual manuscript we also have a further adjective, *liliwanza*, "swift", which does not appear to correspond to any of the Sumerian words, but has also been tentatively proposed to have been derived from the polyphonic sign DU = phonetic tù or logographic "go" (Klinger 2010, 321). It is also the word used to describe the eagle or bee who is despatched to look for the missing god in the numerous Hittite mythological narratives of that type (e.g. KUB 17.10 i 23; KUB 33.33, 8). Could this be a Hittite correspondence to the unknown location (ki-bi) of the god's cultic seat alluded to in the previous line of the Sumerian text, but not otherwise translated in the Hittite?

The Hittite column of this text is thus possibly to be conceptualised more as a field of experimentation, where multiple relationships between the Sumerian and the Hittite can be explored, rather than as a full and accurate translation that brings out all elements of the Sumerian. Quite possibly further aspects of the Sumerian could be explained orally, the speculative etymology being the only one that needed to be recorded in writing. There is also apparently no problem with one Sumerian phrase being given two Hittite "translations", and the phenomena of polyphony and homophony seem to be being exploited repeatedly over a short passage.

None of the above interpretations of this difficult text can be said to be demonstrably correct, but merely indicate an alternative to the approach criticised by Niek Veldhuis (2014a, 29) which brands all cases of deviation from the Mesopotamian "original" as cases of mistaken understanding. Of course it is not possible to put oneself inside the head of the

ancient scribes and work out what they were thinking. More research, however, may establish that such deviations fit into consistent patterns of interpretation by Hittite scholars. It does not appear that translating in the way we understand it today is what they were doing with this text, although translating was a well-established scholarly practice at Hattusa.

Sumerian Literary Texts and Hittite Translations

We now move on from the one case where we seem to have a Hittite version corresponding directly albeit bizarrely to a Sumerian text on a tablet from Hattusa to a case which has recently been flagged as involving an apparent translation, and no speculative etymological interpretation, of a text that is only otherwise attested in Sumerian and in Sumerian-Akkadian bilingual versions in Mesopotamia (Metcalf 2011; 2015a). The series of closely related Hittite language compositions involving the prayer of a mortal, the prayer of someone called Kantuzzili and a prayer of an unknown king to the sun-god, that are preserved at Hattusa, date back to the late fifteenth century and are given the catalogue numbers CTH 372–374, had long been recognised to contain numerous elements in common with various Babylonian compositions in honour of the sun-god Sumerian Utu/Akkadian Šamaš. However, it was debatable to what extent the Hittite compositions represented a more or less free composition that borrowed heavily from Babylonian motifs rather than being a rendering of a particular Babylonian composition. Several copies of a monolingual Sumerian version of a hymn to the sun-god Utu from the northern Babylonian site of Tell-Haddad/Me-Turan in the Diyala region (Cavigneaux 2009), a text also found at Sippar and Susa, which was linked with a bilingual version that was already known, were shown to have close relations with the Hittite composition to such an extent that large parts of the latter could only be considered to be a translation of the former (Metcalf 2011).

The following illustration reproduces Christopher Metcalf's identification of the similarities between the versions of one famous passage in the Sumerian and the Hittite and relies on his presentation of the text (Metcalf 2015a):

- Sumerian
  A rev. 10′
  diĝir-ĝá níĝ-ge$_{17}$-ga-a-ni ḫa-ma-bé šà-bi ĝál ba-ra-ab-taka$_4$-a níĝ-nam-ma-a ga-zu
  Let my god tell me me what offended him, let him reveal its meaning to me, may I know everything
- Hittite
  KUB 30.10 obv. 24′-25′ (CTH 373)
  [*ki-nu-n*]*a-mu-za am-me-el* DINGIR-*IA* ŠÀ-*ŠU* ZI-*ŠU ḫu-u-ma-an-te-*[*et*] *kar-di-it ki-i-nu-ud-du nu-mu wa-aš-du-ul-mi-it* [*te-e-ed*]*-du ne-za-an ga-né-eš-mi*
  Now let my god reveal to me his heart (and) soul with all (his) heart and let him tell me my sins, that I may know them.

The "sins" in the Hittite (*wasdul*) correspond to "what has offended him" in the Sumerian (níĝ-ge$_{17}$-ga-a-ni). The position of *wasdul* "sins" has been transposed with that of "its meaning", Sumerian šà-bi, and "his heart (and) soul", where the Hittite uses a

Sumerogram to write the word for "heart", ŠÀ-*ŠU*, has been substituted for "its meaning". The substitution of a phrase using ŠÀ is significant, as it may bear on the question of whether the Hittite was translated directly from a Sumerian text or from an Akkadian intermediary. In this case one might think the translator had simply taken the Sumerian word šà-bi "its meaning (lit. its heart)", and used the nominal part šà "heart" to write a Hittite phrase. The question is not so easily answered, however. The Hittite phrase *humantet kardit* "with the whole heart", does not occur in the Sumerian text at all, and can be compared with an Akkadian expression known from other contexts: *libbum ǧamrum* "whole heart" (Metcalf 2015a, 46 with fn. 18). Unfortunately we do not have the Akkadian version at this point, so we do not know if it contained this phrase and consequently that the Hittite has translated from the Akkadian. At another point in the sentence, however, we do have a partial Akkadian translation from a bilingual manuscript (ms E, BM 78614, ed. Wasserman 1997) and this appears different to both Hittite and Sumerian. Where both the Hittite and the Sumerian have "I know" (*ǧanesmi* "I know" or ga-zu, "may I know", respectively), the Akkadian has *lummid* "inform (me)", in the imperative (ms. E rev. 2'). However, this bilingual Sumerian–Akkadian tablet does not have to have been the only Akkadian version of the composition that was in circulation, thus the aberrant grammatical construction cannot be taken as an indication that the Hittite and the Sumerian are more closely related to each other than the Akkadian.

The passage continues as follows in the Sumerian:

A rev. 11′-12′

máš-šu-gíd-gíd ^{d}utu-kam ùsu-kam ḫa-ma$^{!}$(BA)-bé šà-bi

ensi(EN.<ME>.LI) x x x-a-bi ḫa-ma-bé šà-bi

May the diviner, the one of Utu, the one of the liver omen, tell me its meaning

May the dream-interpreter …. tell me its meaning (another manuscript adds: let him reveal its meaning to me, [may I know] everything)

The Hittite version from the prayer of Kantuzzili (CTH 373) continues:

KUB 30.10 obv. 25′-28′

na-aš-šu-mu DINGIR-*IA za-aš-ḫé-ia me-e-ma-ú nu-mu-za* DINGIR-*IA* ŠÀ-*šu ki-nu-ud-du* [*nu-mu wa-aš-d*]*u-ul-mi-it te-e-ed-du ne-za-an ǧa-né-eš-mi na-aš-ma-mu* ^{MUNUS}ENSI *me-e-ma-ú* [*na-aš-ma-mu Š*]*A* ^{D}UTU ^{LÚ}AZU *IŠ-TU* ^{UZU}NÍG.GIG *me-e-ma-ú nu-mu-za* DINGIR-*IA ḫu-u-ma-an-te-et kar-di-it* [ŠÀ-*ŠU* ZI-*ŠU*] [*ki-i-nu-ud-du*] *nu-mu wa-aš-du-ul-mi-it te-ed-du ne-za-an ǧa-né-eš-mi*

Let my god either speak to me in a dream – let my god reveal his soul to me and let him tell me my offences so that I may know them – or let a female dream-interpreter speak to me, or let a diviner of the Sun-god speak to me (upon reading) from a liver! Let my god reveal his innermost soul to me with all his heart, and let him tell me my offences so that I may know them!" Translation Metcalf (2015a, 46).

With some transposition of elements, this is once again a fairly literal translation of what is found in the Sumerian.

No modern scholar has thus far dared to assert that the Hittite version is a direct translation from Sumerian. It seems almost inconceivable that this could be the case if our only evidence of Hittite interaction with Sumerian texts as evidenced on tablets found at Hattusa is so peculiar that it can be explained either as a garbled misunderstanding or as a speculative etymological intervention, as we saw above with the Hymn to Iškur. The only way to reconcile the fact that passages from *Utu the Hero* appear in a quite literal translation at Hattusa and the assumption that Hittite scribes understood very little Sumerian or used Sumerian in a different way to what we would consider translation, is through positing an Akkadian intermediary. Yet an Akkadian transmission, however likely it may be, is an assumption and remains to be demonstrated. One piece of evidence that needs to be considered additionally is the fact that a fragment of a bilingual Sumerian/Akkadian *Incantation to Utu* (KUB 4.11; Klinger 2010, 329–330), which in some senses could be called a companion piece to the *Utu the Hero* and contains some of the same elements of imagery, has also been found at Hattusa. This incantation is attested in Mesopotamia from the Old Babylonian period through to the first millennium BC (Alaura and Bonechi 2012, 16 with fn. 66). However, the fragment from Hattusa dates on palaeographic grounds to the thirteenth century BCE. Even if the manuscript might be a copy from an earlier one, this is a period much later than the time of the re-working of the Sumerian/Akkadian Hymn to Utu in the late fifteenth or early fourteenth century BCE. The evidence for the Akkadian transmission of the Sumerian Utu-hymn is thus still missing a link.

Whether there is an Akkadian transmission or not, Metcalf (2015a) has shown how motifs attested in a Sumerian text from the Old Babylonian period have been adapted into a fairly literal translation in Hittite. These motifs are then re-used in the burgeoning genre of royal prayers that is attested at Hattusa from the later fourteenth and thirteenth centuries BCE (Singer 2002), where the trope of asking the god to reveal by different methods precisely what the king or country has done wrong to deserve punishment is attested quite frequently, although using methods of divination that have a more Anatolian characteristic, such as the female ritualist translated as the "Old Woman" or augurs who observe the flights of birds. The addressee of the prayer also changes through time from a male sun-god to the storm-god, the head of the Hittite pantheon, his consort the sun-goddess of Arinna, or the god Telipinu. While this change in focus can certainly be classified as a local adaptation, it should be remembered that a close relationship between the sun-god Utu/Šamaš and the storm-god Iškur/Adad pertained in Mespotamia as regards activities related to oracular inquiry (Alaura and Bonechi 2012, 76), so that the sharing of laudatory motifs between the two deities should not be too surprising.

We thus have to do with a process of careful adaptation and elaboration of originally Sumerian material within the context of local paradigms. Hittite scholars would appear to be selecting specific material to adapt which corresponds to their local interests. It is certainly not the case that there was no oracular activity in Anatolia before the translation of *Utu the Hero* or its probable Akkadian counterpart, nor is it likely that the gods were not asked in prayers to reveal the cause of their displeasure before Utu arrived in Anatolia. However, the efficacy of a prayer depends greatly on the words that are chosen, and the choice of the appropriate words is no doubt the work of scholars.

Concluding remarks

The Sumerian language remains at Hattusa are rather scant and still contain many contradictions. The earliest material belongs to the incantation genre and imports of this type continued throughout the history of the Hittite occupation with Mesopotamian texts, without it being apparent that elements specifically particular to the Sumerian incantations were transferred into Hittite language texts. Certainly it would appear that scholars were working on the sparse Sumerian literary material found at Hattusa at the latest by the thirteenth century BCE, and it may be the case that they were also using it as a means of hermeneutic exploration, practising the recognition of polyphony, homophony, and polysemy in cuneiform writing. This is not just a matter of scholastic playfulness and "scribal fancy". For the scholars who worked on Babylonian omens in Mesopotamia it was a means of researching the instructions and messages of the gods as written in the material of the world, using the obscure Sumerian language as a point of access. One cannot exclude that similar concerns motivated Hittite scholastic study of omens or other texts, even if, as J. Klinger (2010; 2012) has pointed out, the collection of Sumerian literary texts from Hattusa seems too disparate to conceive of a coherent strategy for its collection. It may be that it is simply the fact that the material was in Sumerian which sufficed as a motivation for its collection. Here I think it is important not to make too strict a dichotomy between scholastic/academic and practical uses. The texts are studied because they contain clues that can help those who can decipher them to understand the world and guarantee the protection of their rulers and thus their land. Of course they are studied by scholars, most likely those who belong to the elite of the administration. These were probably the same people who studied the complex lexical list *Erimhuš*, which explored the semantic relationships between words in Sumerian, Akkadian, and (at Hattusa) Hittite (Veldhuis 2014b, 235–236).

A different kind of research into material that ultimately orginated in Sumerian texts appears to be presented by the earlier and quite literal translation of the Sumerian *Utu the Hero*, where translation, likely from or via the mediation of Akkadian, seems to have been performed in a manner that comes close to being identifiable as such from our modern perspective. It is unclear if a possibly related bilingual *Incantation to Utu* (KUB 4.11) belongs with this or not in terms of the time of its collection in Hattusa as a composition for study, or whether that should be placed closer to the more exploratory practice of investigating Sumerian texts that we appear to have by the thirteenth century. Other extensive Hittite translations also date from the Middle Hittite period (fifteenth century BCE), such as the famous Hurrian–Hittite bilingual (Neu 1996). Perhaps this translation of parts of *Utu the Hero* was even an activity that was performed elsewhere, possibly outside of the Hittite capital, by the kind of scholars who specialised in translation rather than speculation, possibly even in a centre where this text was more at home such as northern Mesopotamia.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

Ancient Near Eastern Literary Influences on Hebrew Literature and the Hebrew Bible

Michael Wingert

Introduction

Since the nineteenth century, Biblical Studies have entered a new era with the emergence of the fields of Assyriology and Egyptology, creating new sets of questions that scholars could ask with regard to extra-textual historical, linguistic, and literary contexts from which the Hebrew Bible emerged. K. Lawson Younger (Hallo and Younger 2003, xxxvii) observes that "the best comparative studies recognize that the literature of the ancient Near East was produced not only out of a particular culture but also out of a larger literary tradition"; such a tradition would establish the context from which the Hebrew literary tradition emerged, and in the words of Younger, "reveal certain aspects of a text that might remain hidden." Differing interests among scholars led to both an affinity for and rejection of the comparative approach to the Hebrew Bible. Whether authoring or redacting, centuries passed in assembling the scriptures, posing a major challenge for establishing with any degree of certainty a context for literary influence upon Hebrew language literature by Israel's neighbors. We may further ask the question about who the authors really are. Can or should redactors be considered authors if the influences exerted upon the written product they produce were anonymous works embedded in the local culture or repurposed written works such as annals of the kings or temple designs and schematics textualized and embedded in a historiography guiding a specific narrative trajectory? Questions of this type, difficult as they are to answer, do assist in framing the comparative investigation concerning ancient Near Eastern literary influences on the Hebrew Bible.

The literary traditions from the three major regions surrounding Israel and Judah – Egypt, Syro-Anatolia, and Mesopotamia – each exert a major influence on the literary

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tradition of the Hebrew Bible. The text of the Hebrew Bible (in its Masoretic shaping) comes down to us today in the form of one book – although it is both one and at the same time many. It is more useful to perceive the Hebrew Bible as its own ancient Near Eastern product as well as an anthology of ancient Near Eastern literature. Indeed, we must regard the Hebrew Bible as the anthology par excellence of ancient Near Eastern literature because the collection not only highlights and preserves the various genres and motifs of the ancient Near East, but it also comments upon, elaborates, retorts and repurposes such literature.

The Problem of "Literature"

Literature has been typically associated with written works of a culture, though in recent years scholars have begun to include forms of communication beyond the written word such as oral recitation and thus "oral literature", music, and art. The movement toward a non-textual "literature" befits any discussion concerning literature and the formation of the Hebrew Bible, though ultimately the textual product, by its very nature as an artifact of transmission, is the chief concern of the discussion. When Alfred North Whitehead commented in his *On the Aims of Education* that "the safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato," (North Whitehead 1979, 39) he rightly observed the prevalent occurrence of the diachronic movement of thought in society. His comments are not only useful for observing his own field of philosophy, but also summarize the phenomenon of intellectual determinism as it relates to the influence of literature in its various forms in contact with neighboring traditions and succession over time.

Anything textual is in its essence a secondary or even tertiary phenomenon. Literature itself is an emergent property of the transmission of cerebral intentionality coded in the form of speech acts. In the hyperliterate world of today, we normally compose at the same time we textualize such intentionality. With the exception of a certain subset of the epistolary genre, the process that went into developing and thus defining literature in the ancient Near East was far more intricate. Orality, the tradition of passing down socio-cultural data, was the primary means by which human beings conveyed their own self-identity, stories, awareness and understanding of the world. In time, the ideas and memories of early civilization developed linguistic artifacts – *writing*, as a technology for the preservation of both general and specific ideas. Walter J. Ong, in his seminal work on the topic *Orality and Literacy*, rightly declares (2002, 11): "Writing makes "words" appear similar to things because we think of words as the visible marks signaling words to decoders: we can see and touch such inscribed "words" in texts and books." The text of the Hebrew Bible is in a sense self-aware of this problem as outline by the scandal of textualization recorded in Jeremiah 8:8: "How do you say, "We are wise, and we possess the Torah of YHWH?" In fact, the false pen of the scribes has made it into a lie" (Schniedewind 2003, 115).

The Scribal Tradition

Scribes emerged in the ancient Near East as a professional class of record keepers who textualized ideas and events, freeing such from the unreliability of memory. The performative function of scribes in the ancient Near East, to include those of Judah, has been

explained by Carr in his work *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart Origins of Scripture and Literature*. Scribes likely inherited their specialization through the family trade, and if not through the direct family, scribal schools were modeled on the family (Carr 2005, 21–22). The investment of time required for developing scribal proficiency likely limited the pool of eligible individuals for the profession, ensuring an elite status for a scribal class. Such a class would have been attached to those most interested in the preservation of ideas and events: the religious and political segments of society. It is for this reason that we find most genres of literary production treating affairs of the cult or the state. To be sure, the sheer number of contracts and receipts from ancient Mesopotamia attest to the role scribes played outside the direct operations of the cult and state, though even these instances functioned within the context of the state's justice. Regarding the Hebrew Bible however, the surviving receipts and contracts from the Near East offer very little literary insight for the direct study of the text but do serve to inform Biblical Studies in regards to the societies from which the Hebrew Bible emerged.

In ancient Judah, literacy extended beyond the scribal class as is evident by the letter from the literate soldier (Lachish Letter 3). In the text written upon this ostracon, the soldier, offended by the accusation that he would need a scribe to read a letter to him, asserts that he needs no scribe nor has he ever needed a scribe. Though this soldier exhibited skill in basic literacy, literacy is not congruent with scribalism as a profession. Scribes were professional craftsmen who developed, maintained, and framed literary materials for the purposes of the cult and state. Insofar as the Hebrew Bible is concerned, the motivating factors in the primary layers of the text (e.g. poems, annals, floor plans, etc.) provided the later scribes the foundation for framing large portions of the Hebrew Bible according to narrative arcs articulating the theological sensibilities of the faith community.

The material from which the scribes of ancient Israel (to include Judah) utilized to construct the narrative of their self-identity had its origins in the living traditions of the surrounding regions, whether it was conveyed as textual or as oral literature. As a function of the diffusion of ideas, writing had a secondary position in the process of scribal transmission. This is pointed out by Schniedewind who notes that "writing had a limited role in Israel during this early period. The literature of Israel was primarily oral" (Schniedewind 2003, 63). Nevertheless, written and oral conveyance of scribal materials ought to be regarded less as two distinct categories of transmission and more as two modes of the same scribal culture utilized to preserve and proliferate ideas in the ancient Near East.

The production of texts is regularly tied to scribal education that propagated a literary *koine* throughout the region. This *koine* was comprised of genres of literature common to all scribal traditions, but none more prevalent than the wisdom traditions. According to Waltke (1979, 211), "the comparison made in 1 Kings 4:29–34 between Solomon's wisdom and that of the ancient Near Eastern sages strongly implies that his proverbs were a part of an international, pan-oriental, wisdom literature." Nearly every literate culture from the region possess some type of proverb tradition, so common themes are to be expected. These proverbs, stretching from Mesopotamia to Egypt, demonstrate pronounced similarities between regional wisdom traditions with those of the Hebrew Bible and highlight one illustration of scribal dissemination of ideas.

Oral literature was the likely mechanism used throughout the ancient Near East to disseminate both ideas at the macroscale, and idiomatic language, quips, and tropes at the microscale. This phenomenon led to common literary motifs present in each of the major cultures of the ancient Near East. While we need not be quick to declare influence resulting

from any commonality found among these motifs, they are starting points for further research. Moreover, many of these instances need only to be regarded as part of the larger literary *koine* of the region. Among such prevalent motifs are: the notions of a land that abounds in honey cf. (Exod 3:8; Num 13:27; the *Tale of Sinuhe* from Egypt and likewise Mesopotamia [Gelb 1959, 163]); the four winds that visit the land (cf. Jer 39:46; Ezek 37:9; Zech 2:6; Dan 7:2, 8:8 11:4; *Coffin Text Spell* 1130 [Hallo and Younger 2003, 26], the Assyrian recension of *Atraḫasis* [see Green 2003, 59]); the tree of life (cf. Gen 2:9; 3:22, 24; Prov 3:18; the praise to Amun-Re [P. Bulaq 17 / P. Cairo 58038 in Hallo and Younger 2003, 37–40]; and the Mesopotamian tradition [see Parpola 1993]), etc.

Mesopotamia

Of all the regions of the ancient Near East exerting literary influence on the Hebrew Bible, the traditions from Mesopotamia are the most prominently displayed. It is not simply the number of genres of literature produced in Mesopotamia – myth, legal codes, annals – but the extent these materials travelled regionally. The Amarna letters, a Bronze Age era cache of peripheral Akkadian texts found at Tel el-Amarna Egypt, testify to the reach and use of Akkadian language and writing technology beyond the bounds of Mesopotamia proper among peoples foreign to Mesopotamia (i.e. Egyptians and the communities of the Levant). Even beyond the scribal traditions valued by royal administration, mythological texts such as the *Epic of Gilgamesh* have been found as far away as Megiddo in what would later become the land of Israel. The specific mechanisms for the dissemination of Akkadian literature throughout the Near East are not fully understood, though dispatching of scribes throughout the region combined with the adoption of the cuneiform scribal systems by the Amorites, Hurrians, Hittites – three major communities who exerted considerable influence over the Levant during the Bronze Age – from the Mesopotamian scribal tradition (in addition to the West Semitic community at Ugarit) certainly provide a saturated context for the propagation of Mesopotamian literature.

The mythological setting of Mesopotamian literature largely exerts two modes of influence on the Hebrew Bible: (1) narrative congruence, where specific elements of storylines are acceptable as part of the mythological imagery for the compilers of the Hebrew Bible, and (2) points of contrast where a rhetoric specific to the cultic and mythological sensibilities of Mesopotamia is utilized to articulate the particular theological perspectives and concerns of the compilers of the Hebrew Bible. In most cases, the Hebrew Bible presents both of these modes working in concert. Common features of certain story lines often impose a temptation to infer influence when in fact those commonalities likely proceed from sources beyond the scope of the immediate investigation. To illustrate the complexity of such a discussion, we may observe the creation account presented in Genesis 1 and its comparison with the Babylonian creation account in the *Enuma Elish*. Some of the questions we may begin with are: Who is writing and when is the text being written? What sort of comparative language is present, if any? How does the content of the material compare with corresponding literature?

Since the development of the Documentary Hypothesis by Julius Wellhausen who attributed the development of the Pentateuch to four sources (the Yahwist or J-source,

the Elohist or E-source, the Priestly or P-source and the Deuteronomist or D-source), Genesis 1 has been ascribed to the Priestly (P) source. Initially the Priestly source was thought to be exilic, written during the period of Judah's exile in Babylon; others over the years, namely Yehezkiel Kaufmann, posited a pre-exilic (P) source. The challenge presented by the discussion is further complicated with a subtle point in the realm of comparative Semitics. The first words of the book of Genesis: "in the beginning" or in Hebrew, *bə-rēšît* בראשית, finds its parallel phrasing in the Akkadian calque *ina rēš* (Hallo and Younger 2003, 403). Apart from issues involving the attempted dating of texts and nuances of scribal conventions, the narrative content forms the larger point of comparison for establishing matters of influence. In *Enuma Elish*, Marduk, the patron deity of Babylon, slays the sea-dragon Tiamat ("the Deep"), splitting her in two, leading to the creation of the world. By contrast, the account provided in Genesis 1 details God creating the world by fiat, separating the waters above from the waters below, followed by the spirit of God (or perhaps the divine wind) hovering over the surface of "the Deep" (Heb. *Təhôm*). Absent from the Genesis account is the violent contest won by the national deity.

The origin of both creation accounts is less certain. As the chief antagonist, "the Deep" is not likely set in a central Mesopotamian context (see Jacobsen 1976, 168). The notion of a divided sea is a prevalent motif in the Hebrew Bible (cf. Exod. 15:8, Josh 3:13–16, Neh 9:11, Job 26:12, Pss 66:6, 74:13, 78:13, 136:13, Is 63:12). Had there been any prevalent mythological tradition(s) in contact with the Genesis 1 narrative, we may expect to find them closer to the coastal regions. Clifford notes that the Memphite cosmogonic traditions convey the shaping of water and the importance of the role of light in creation (Clifford 1994, 141); likewise, the Theban tradition accounts for light as the first creation of Amun, who "began speaking in the midst of stillness, opening every eye and causing them to look" (Hallo and Younger 2003, 23–24). The Phoenician tradition as recorded by Philo of Byblos observes the significant role of darkness and that, like the Hebrew Bible creation account, a wind led to the creation of *death* or Mot, the Canaanite god of death (Clifford 1994, 142; cf. Hos 13:14–15). Though not necessarily a creation myth, more common themes are found in the Baal Cycle from Ugarit where the protagonist storm god Baal slays Yam (the god of the sea) by dismemberment (KTU 1.2 IV 27a "*yašuttu yamma*"; note also the discussion in Smith 1994, 351–355), and scatters him about.

Putting aside the question of a definable source for both the creation narratives of Genesis and *Enuma Elish*, other portions of the Hebrew Bible do appear to be aware of the sensibilities articulated by *Enuma Elish*. Clifford provides a summary on the topic of creation in Isaiah 40–55 ("Second Isaiah") and its dual role of inner-biblical exegesis as well as its seeming rebuttal of myths contemporaneous with the text (Clifford 1994, 163–176). Isaiah 43:16 defines Yahweh as "the one who makes a way in the Sea, a path in the Mighty Waters" in a reference to the exodus; later in 51:9b–10, the qualification of Yahweh with the initiator of the exodus event is prefaced with a statement congruent with the imagery described in *Enuma Elish*: "Was it not you who cut Rahab to pieces, who pierced that monster through? Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep, who made a road in the depths of the sea so that the redeemed might cross over?" (Isa 51:9b–10; cf. Exod 15).

Water forms a central motif in the primeval histories of Mesopotamia and the Hebrew Bible. The *Sumerian Flood Story*, the *Atraḫasis* narrative, the *Epic of Gilgamesh* XI (likely

working within the mythological framework of this tradition) and the later historian Berossus recount the story of a flood similar to the story found in Genesis 6. When the antediluvian period ends in a flood, the protagonist survives by riding out the experience in a boat. The glue binding these traditions together, according to Damrosch was the literary development of the late second and early first millennium when Mesopotamian texts merged the categories of poetic epics and royal inscriptions, whereby the existential themes of poetic literature entered into the realm of prose narratives; such a presentation coalesced in the Yahwistic tradition, where the Genesis 2–11 block explored the existential and cultural issues associated with poetic epic literature, "but in prose and with historical awareness" (see Clifford 1994, 145–146, citing Damrosch).

Following the creation account in Genesis 1, the second creation narrative treating the creation of human beings and the introduction of death in Genesis 2–3 contains several common themes with the Mesopotamian story of Adapa. Tammuz and Nin-Gizzida (lit. "lord of the right-hand tree") guard the door to heaven, where Adapa ascends and encounters Anu, the sky god (Hallo and Younger 2003, 449). Anu asks why the matters pertaining to heaven and earth were revealed to a mortal (Adapa), whereas in the Genesis 2–3 account, Adam willingly eats of the Tree of Knowledge; Adapa in the service of the god Ea, is instructed not to eat or drink anything of heaven, and so he did not eat the food of life presented to him. Genesis 2–3 instead has the deity (Yahweh) directing Adam and Eve to eat of any tree save one, presumably including the Tree of Life, which they too do not eat. In this comparison, it is also worth noting that the name Adapa is a phonological variant of Adam – the letters [p] and [m] being both bilabials that occasionally interchange with one another.

Besides mythological literature, the next most important literary influence on the Hebrew Bible comes from the corpus of legal literature from the region. The law collections of Mesopotamia impacted the literary and legal traditions of the ancient Near East for roughly two millennia before the Common Era. The Code of Hammurabi for instance, was recopied for more than a millennium after its composition (Levinson and Sherman 2015, 396–404) into the Neo-Assyrian period. This period saw a rise in literary activity under the influence of Neo-Assyrian hegemony and is a likely setting for the emergence of the laws comprising the Covenant Code. Though there is some commonality with the Code of Hammurabi, the laws of the Pentateuch are unique to the community of the Hebrew Bible. Previous clan law or custom, when textualized, was codified according to the casuistic format (If…, [then]…) common to ancient Near Eastern law. By contrast, the apodictic laws of the Pentateuch, those of the 10 Commandments are presented as a series of commands.

A point of influence between Mesopotamian and biblical law comes through the mode of its presentation as the product of divine wisdom. The spread of the legal tradition of Mesopotamia correlates to the region where cuneiform was used to write the dominant native language of the ruling powers: Akkadian, Sumerian, and Hittite. Implicit in this observation is the connection between the scribal traditions subject to the cuneiform sphere of influence with the dissemination of such laws in the context of scribal school curricula, such as wisdom traditions. The term *Torah* for instance, is better understood according to the translation "instruction" than it is according to is later rendering "law". The statutes indicate instruction from the deity disseminated by the king. Shamash, the

Mesopotamian sun god and dispenser of justice, presents the law to Hammurabi as depicted iconographically atop the famous Hammurabi stele. Similarly, the biblical portrayal depicts law as divine instruction, beginning with the ascent of Moses up Mt. Sinai and articulated throughout the Pentateuch.

Deuteronomy, the final book of the Pentateuch concludes with a sermon given by Moses delivering laws to the people, presented in the form of a Neo-Assyrian vassal treaty. The framing of the Mosaic sermon in such a way would likely have had a profound impact on those living during the times of the Neo-Assyrian hegemony over the ancient Near East. Instead of declaring unwavering loyalty to the political overlords of the region, Deuteronomy frames the instruction of law in the context of unwavering loyalty to Yahweh.

Egypt

A number of factors connect Egypt and the Levantine scribal traditions. Both the material culture and the textual record from Egypt testify to extensive Egyptian contact with the Levant throughout the Bronze and Iron Ages (Zhakevich 2015, 180–83). The early evidence for the development of the alphabet most likely points to an Egyptian setting for development of an ink-based alternative to the standard Mesopotamian cuneiform system for writing West Semitic languages. The Mesopotamian system required clay as the primary medium into which cuneiform impressions would be made, whereas the ink-based system of Egypt required papyrus as the primary surface for writing. A practical alternative in wide use in Egypt was to use ink to write upon the surface of shattered clay ostraca, a tradition well-attested in ancient Israel (Zhakevich 2015, 187). Egyptian loan words in Hebrew for ink-based writing technology evince a connection between the scribal traditions of Judah and Egypt. Moreover, the use of hieratic numerals found within the corpus of Iron Age Hebrew inscriptions further strengthens the proposition of Egyptian influence on early Levantine scribal tradition (Lambdin 1953, 145–155; Schniedewind 2013, 58–60).

Wisdom traditions have long been considered features of scribal schools. Due to the numerous commonalities in proverbial traditions, the wisdom literature of the Hebrew Bible has been regarded as a successor to the Egyptian scribal tradition. Apart from the cultic tradition of music (cf. Psalms) common to most regions of the ancient Near East, the genres of this wisdom tradition include maxims of complaint in the vein of Ecclesiastes and instructional proverbs akin to the book of Proverbs.

The *Complaints of Khakheperrē-Sonb* share significant parallels with the book of Ecclesiastes (Hallo and Younger 2003, 1104–1105), presented in the form of maxims. The most recognizable set of instructions preceding Proverbs are the *Instructions of Amenenope*, a text assigned to the Ramesside period roughly contemporaneous with the emergence of Israel. According to Lichtheim in her contribution to the collection *Context of Scripture*, Proverbs 22:20 ("Have I not written for you thirty sayings of admonitions and knowledge?") asserts a prior knowledge of the thirty chapters of the *Instruction of Amenenope* (Lichtheim 2003, 115).

> *Amenemope Ch. 1 (III: 9–10)*: Give your ear and hear the sayings, Give your heart to understand them; It profits to put them in your heart.

> *Proverbs 22:17–18*: Bend your ear and hear the words of the wise; apply your mind to my knowledge for it will be a delight if you guard them within you.
>
> *Amenemope*, *Ch. 18 (XIX: 16–17)*: The words men say are one thing, the deeds of the god are another.
>
> *Proverbs 19:21*: The plans in the mind of a man are many, but it is God's purpose that will prevail.
>
> (Lichtheim 2003, 115–22)

The Moses narrative of Exodus shares several key features with that of Egyptian literature. Donald B. Redford regards Isis hiding her son Horus among the papyrus-thicket and placing the child in a papyrus boat as one such incident (1967, 220) marking a broader literary motif of the exposed child (see also Rendsburg 2006, 205). Gary Rendsburg also notes the parallel between Moses learning the secret name of God and Isis learning the secret name of Ra (Rendsburg 2015, 244), and the miracle of transformation of the inanimate object (Aaron's rod in the Hebrew Bible and a wax crocodile in a story from Egypt) into an animate *tannin* (Heb. Sea-monster, serpent, dragon) in the case of Exodus and a living crocodile in Egyptian literature (Rendsburg 2006, 209). These parallels offer typological evidence for the influence of the Egyptian literary tradition upon the framing of the Moses narrative in Exodus.

Typological influence of Egyptian literature on the Hebrew Bible is also probable in the case of the *Tale of Sinuhe*. The story recounts a man named Sinuhe, an Egyptian attendant to the wife of Sesostris the king of Egypt, who journeyed to the Levant where he spent many years becoming a part of ancient Canaanite culture before returning to Egypt. This story was one of the most popular pieces of prose literature coming from Middle Kingdom Egypt. The narrative arc of the story forms an oicotype that shares similarities with the Joseph novella found in Genesis 37–50. Sinuhe the Egyptian flees to Canaan while Joseph the son of Israel was taken into Egypt. The two each rise to positions of leadership in their respective locales, take local wives, and are eventually reunited with their families (King 1987, 577–594).

Though often mentioned in the same tradition as the Homeric epics, Lichtheim (2003, 79) and Frolov and Wright (2011, 453–471) note parallel accounts between the *Tale of Sinuhe* and the individual combat of champions as presented between David and Goliath in 1 Sam 17. The individual confrontation with the javelin-wielding (Lichtheim 1973, 234) foreigner sets up the antagonist who is slain by the hero with a projectile hitting the antagonists' forehead, causing him to plummet face first into the ground. Harry A. Hoffner (1968, 220–225) however distinguishes between the Sinuhe comparison with 1 Sam 17, which he recognizes as a duel, versus the presentation of combat in the *Hittite Apology of Ḫattušiliš III* as a true contest of champions, opening the door to Hittite literary traditions impacting the backdrop to the literature of the Hebrew Bible.

Syro-Anatolia

The Syro-Anatolian tradition effectively conveys the textual production and contact between the Northwest Semitic world and that of the neighboring and co-habiting Indo-European (namely, Hittite and Luwian) peoples and traditions of the same region.

The Indo-European backdrop to biblical literature has been one of the least studied areas of comparative research. Hoffner (2003, xxix) has noted that one of the challenges scholarship has faced has been the lack of students within biblical studies of the Indo-European Hittite language that is all too different from the Semitic languages upon which most of these students concentrate. Previously, it was common for those in biblical studies to focus on the textual tradition coming out of Ugarit, as it remains the largest corpus of texts in a Northwest Semitic language set in and among ancient Israel's closest neighbors in a time prior to the writing of the Hebrew Bible. Still, Hittite influence upon or interaction with Ugaritic literature, and by extension the scribal traditions of the lands within the Hittite sphere of influence must be regarded in the same conversation as Ugarit as an antecedent for forms and motifs found in biblical literature. The Hittites ruled their Bronze Age Empire for nearly 500 years, wielding their influence throughout the Levant. The remaining Luwian inscriptions from the Iron Age testify to the Indo-European continuity in the region and contact with the Northwest Semitic inscriptional tradition.

Hittite Influences on Biblical Literature

The Hittite homeland was located in central Anatolia with its capital Ḫattuša located near present day Boğazkale, Turkey. The Hebrew Bible remembers Hittites from the Bronze Age in the memorial tradition of the patriarchal narratives, and even remembers the Hittites as an antecedent culture of the city of Jerusalem; "This is what the Sovereign LORD says to Jerusalem: Your ancestry and birth were in the land of the Canaanites; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite" (Ezek 16:3). The situation however becomes more complicated when the discussion labels individuals as Hittites during the Iron Age after the collapse of the Hittite Empire (e.g. "Uriah the Hittite" from 2 Sam). As noted from Iron Age Akkadian texts, people were still identifying themselves as being from the *māt ḫatti*, or land of the Hittites, a likely euphemism for Indo-European peoples (most probably Luwians) from the northern Levant who had settled to the south in ancient Israel.

There is no clear cut connection between Hittite literature and the Hebrew Bible, though there are common genres and narrative forms that are worth noting, namely historiography, ritual, and mythology (with the potential genre of treaty-language). Most points of commonality shared between Hittite literature and the Hebrew Bible occur in the books of Samuel. Yigael Yadin associated David's conquest of Jerusalem (2 Sam 5:6–8) with an asserted Hittite practice of stationing the blind and the lame on the walls of fortresses, a practice he tied to the Hittite soldier's oath. Yadin also suggested a Hittite origin for the Jebusites (Yadin 1963, 267–270). Though an interesting assertion, inter-textual analysis renders Yadin's contention as a leap at best since the accounts of the Hittite soldiers' oaths share little in common with the account from 2 Samuel 5:6–8 save the mention of blind men. Still, when redactional layers are stripped away from this text, the narrative format shares unique stylistic features with the so-called *Manly Deeds of Šuppilluliuma*. The third person narrative format with character injection found in the *Deeds* is less common in the historiographical literature of the ancient Near East than it is in the Hebrew Bible. Comparing the account from the *Deeds* with the proposed

pre-redactional construction of 2 Samuel 5:6 shows several instances of commonality, such as the following:

> *Deeds*: Then he [the Hittite King] went back to Mt. Zukkuki and built two towns: Athulissa and Tuhupurpuna. While (the Hittite) built towns, the enemy kept boasting: "Down into the land of Almina we shall never let him (come)."
>
> *2 Sam 5:6a, c*: And the king and his men went to the Jebusite…. and he (the Jebusite) said to David: "You shall not enter here."

An additional point of discussion between Indo-European literature of Syro-Anatolia and the Hebrew Bible concerns ritual language. The Hittite *Uḫḫamuwa Ritual against Plague* shares several common features with Leviticus 16 (perhaps also the Ugaritic text KTU 1.40; see Pardee 2002, 77–83). The sacrifices offered in Leviticus 16 and the *Uḫḫamuwa Ritual* both are paired with the dispatching of a goat into lands away from the community.

> *Uḫḫamuwa Ritual*: They bring in one wether … and they drive the wether forth on the road to the enemy… Afterwards they bring one billy goat and two sheep. He consecrates the goat to the Heptad, and one sheep he consecrates to the Sun God, but the other sheep they kill and they cook it. (Hallo and Younger 2003, 162)
>
> *Lev 16:9–10*: And Aaron shall present the goat upon which the lot fell for the Yahweh, and make him a sin-offering. But the goat, on which the lot fell for Azazel, shall be set alive before the Yahweh, to make atonement upon him, to send him away for Azazel into the wilderness.

Weinfeld (1981, 99) asserts that the commonalities between Hittite literature and the priestly literature of the Hebrew Bible exist as the result of the priestly writers adapting from the heritage of the Hittite-Hurrian pre-Israelite presence of Jerusalem. Of these influences, Weinfeld observed similar instructions found in Leviticus 12 and the Hittite Birth Ritual, as well as in the festival offerings between the Hittites and Numbers 29:2ff, where one bull, seven lambs, one goat, and meal offerings and libations function in parallel.

The final proposal for Hittite literary influence is in the realm of mythology. Determining sources for mythological sensibilities is a more difficult task, though various mythological strands and traditions may be juxtaposed with one another in order to establish commonality. A prevalent theme of Semitic literature (including Hebrew) is found in the unified expression of the world. This perspective is to be contrasted with the dualistic understanding of reality found in Indo-European culture and tradition. To illustrate, the Semitic notion of the *nfš* (Heb.נפש), regularly translated as "soul" but also understood in the simplest sense "life", does not distinguish a difference between life in a material or physical sense ("the mortal life" or "body") and life immaterially or in a metaphysical sense ("soul"). The Greek tradition on the other hand provides a stark and ardent expression of dualism in its attestation of this Indo-European dichotomy. For the Greeks, the standard rendering of the Hebrew *nefeš* נפש is expressed only in the immaterial or metaphysical sense by the term *psyche* ("soul", "mind"), a term that on its own is complimented with

a secondary understanding of higher faculties in the "nous" (see Suriano 2014 for this discussion in its Syro-Anatolian setting).

This sort of dualism emerges in the mythological tradition of the Indo-European peoples in the story-telling device focused on brothers, often represented by twins, who complement and/or contradict one another, representing two poles of reality. The twin motif stretches across the Indo-European sphere of influence from Roman (Romulus and Remus) to Greek (Castor and Pollux) through Iran (Cambyses and Smerdis) and within the Indic literature (the *Ashwin/Nasatya* twins). More localized in the Syro-Anatolian region of the ancient Near East, a treaty between the Hittite Šuppiluliuma and Hurrian Šattiwaza (KBo 1.1) mentions this tradition by the invocation of the twin (*Nasatya*) gods called upon as witnesses to the treaty. Additionally, this mythological dichotomy is likely behind the god pairs noted in the Semitic world where contact with Indo-European tradition was prevalent (note especially god pairs at Ugarit *Šaḥru* and *Šalimu*– Dawn and Dusk – paralleling a similar function as the *Ashwin/Nasatya* twins).

The authors or redactors of the Hebrew Bible make a point to quell any semblance of duality in their conception of the divine, though vestiges of the dichotomous brothers' motif may be lying behind certain strands of the Hebrew Bible connected to this region. In the book of Genesis, the patriarchal narratives are set within the Syro-Anatolian tradition, and articulate the genealogy from Abraham to Jacob through the same literary device of brothers in juxtaposition (first through Ishmael and Isaac, and with the twin motif expressed through Esau and Jacob).

Ugaritic Literature and the Hebrew Bible

Ugarit was a city known from other ancient sources lying well within the sphere of Hittite influence. The discovery of the city state of Ugarit on the Syrian Coast in the early part of the 20th century yielded a treasure trove of literary data in the West Semitic linguistic tradition. The surviving texts from Ugarit are in the form of clay tablets and written in cuneiform. Several languages from the region are represented at Ugarit, but the most important corpus comes in the local Ugaritic cuneiform script used to represent the local coastal Levantine dialect of Northwest Semitic (sometimes considered "Canaanite" in the literature, though not without qualification). Even though the cuneiform texts that survived until today evince scribal proximity toward their Anatolian and Mesopotamian neighbors, the shape of the characters of the Ugaritic alphabet suggests a knowledge of the ink-based West-Semitic alphabetic tradition. Ugarit was destroyed between the years 1190–85 B.C.E., just over a century before the establishment of the Israelite monarchy. Cassuto (1975, 17) asserts that "Biblical literature was but a continuation of the antecedent Canaanite literature," the vast majority of which emerge from Ugarit. The bulk of the textual artifacts discovered at Ugarit were found in the royal complex and the house of the "High Priest," so called because of the number of ritual and mythological texts found at the location. The allocation of Ugarit's literary deposits lends credence to the assertion that writing as a profession was restricted to elites within the governmental apparatus and the ritual cult. The literature of Ugarit paints a picture of the Levantine literary tradition from which the burgeoning Israelite scribal tradition eventually emerged several centuries later.

The vestiges of ancient Israelite religion extant in the literature of the Hebrew Bible display perspectives common to both Ugaritic and Israelite traditions (see Cross 1997). At the forefront of this discussion is the divine council, headed by El at Ugarit and Yahweh in the Hebrew Bible (note also the use of the plural in the creation narrative from Gen 1: *ʾĕlōhîm*, "gods"; v. 26: "Let us make the human in our own image"). In both traditions, the lesser deities are known as divine sons: the sons of El at Ugarit and the sons of Elohim in the Hebrew Bible (cf. Job 1:6, 38:7; Ps 29:1 "Elim"). In addition, the Ugaritic pantheon attests to a number of deities mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, many of which have been demythologized though their presentation often serves as a reminder of the polytheistic backdrop behind the emergence of Israel. While El, Baal, and Athirtu (Asherah) are prominent deities in the Hebrew Bible, other deities such as Mot ("Death"), Yam ("Sea"), Šapšu ("Sun"), and Yariḫu ("Moon") are typically perceived according to their standard, mundane translations and not specifically as deities or divine forces. Still, the Psalms regularly depict these powers as capable of paying homage to Yahweh, the God of Israel.

Operating in the same continuum as the Hittite/Luwian literary tradition, the ritual texts from Ugarit attest to the same instructional tradition for types of ritual offerings prescribed in the Hebrew Bible. KTU 1.41 and 1.87 consist of texts that describe the rites for the annual grape harvest to include peace offerings and burnt offerings. These documents were found in the house of the High Priest, illustrating the scribal importance among the cultic community – a tradition that continued into the Iron Age within ancient Israel.

Ugarit attests to other figures and an institution present, but somewhat enigmatic, in the Hebrew Bible: the *rapʾiūma* (Heb. Rephaim) and the *marziḫu* (Heb. *marzēaḥ*). The institution of the *marziḫu* is mentioned in several different settings in Ugaritic literature: a receipt for the purchase of a *marziḫu*, which notes members of the *marziḫu* (membership is likewise noted in KTU 4.399), one noting a relationship to a vineyard with the institution of the *marziḫu*, and two myths associated with the activity of the *marziḫu* depicting feasting and drunken revelry. The accounts of the *marzēaḥ* located in the prophetic literature of the Hebrew Bible condemn the practice (Amos 6:7, Jer 16:5–9).

Another text from Ugarit potentially relating to the *marziḫu* (the subject matter fits the context of a *marziḫu*, though there is a spelling variation), conjures up another instance of cryptic biblical figures known as the *rapʾiūma* in Ugaritic and the Rephaim in Hebrew. The text invites the *rapʾiūma* to a banquette, summoning them three times. The act of summoning the *rapʾiūma*, deceased beings, is the key feature of a liturgical text commemorating the past kings of Ugarit as *rapʾiūma*. The Ugaritic texts provide insight as to the identity of this group of deceased beings found in the Hebrew Bible (Is 26:14, Ps 88:11, Prov 9:18). A question remaining for studies in biblical literature concerns the extent to which kingship, a central theme in the Ugaritic texts, may be imaged or understood in the Hebrew Bible's mention of the Rephaim.

Kingship at Ugarit may be best expressed in the *Legend of Kirta* (KTU 1.14–1.16), a story consisting of three extant tablets (the story presumably goes beyond what survives as the end of tablet three ends in mid-sentence) that follows the desire of a king to procure heirs for the survival of his dynasty. Coogan and Smith (2012, 66–67) link the character of Kirta to the tradition of the Rephaim based on the kingly blessing Kirta received in Tablet II, and while the narrative exhibits several literary pieces for comparison with the Hebrew Bible (Kirta and David and the problem of succession; the king as a son of the

deity: cf. Ps 2:7, 89:26, 2 Sam 7:14. See Coogan and Smith 2012, 68–71), the story is most commonly associated with the book of Job. Kirta and Job are reckoned as figures of upright status, deserving the families that have been taken from them. The two lament the loss of their progeny, are stricken ill and return to health (see O'Connor 1989).

Apart from the *marziḥu* texts concerning the receipt of purchase for and list recording a certain *marziḥu*, the ritual and mythological texts mentioned thus far are formally poetic. Like the poetry found in the Hebrew Bible, a major feature of Ugaritic poetry is parallelism, usually composed as bicola (tricola is present but rare) and expressed through syntactical, numerical, chiastic, and antithetical parallelism (see Watson and Wyatt 1999, 165–192). Schniedewind notes such parallelism in his comparison of Psalm 93:3 and KTU 1.114:4–6:

Ps 93:3	The ocean sounds, O LORD, The ocean sounds its thunder, The ocean sounds its pounding.
KTU 1.114 4–6	The gods eat and drink, They drink wine until sated, Vintage until inebriated.

(Schniedewind 2013, 43)

Schniedewind concludes that the preservation of such rhetorical forms in the West Semitic tradition suggest a continuity in oral literature and shared scribal training (Schniedewind 2013, 43–44).

Conclusion

The growth of literacy spanning the emergence of civilization in the ancient Near East transformed the way in which information was disseminated and memorialized. Concepts that were propagated and eventually textualized created the social conditions by which ideas structured by genre at the macro level and motif at the micro level would seep into the literary traditions of neighboring communities. As such, the Hebrew Bible ought to be regarded as a localized product consisting of an ancient anthology of Near Eastern literature, framed through the lens of ancient Israelite and ultimately the early Jewish community.

Akkadian (and by extension Sumerian) literature has since its decipherment played the central role in the contextual studies of the Hebrew Bible. Similarly, Ugaritic literature has taken a prominent place within the realm of biblical studies. The literary collections from the Semitic world have been the most accessible to scholars of the Hebrew Bible who exercise most of their training in Hebrew and closely related Semitic languages. A number of studies over the years have explored the connections Egyptian literature has over and with the Hebrew Bible, but establishing points of influence between Indo-European languages and literary traditions such as Hittite and Luwian need to be further cultivated in the coming years. The challenge of course lies in the limited access scholars of the Hebrew Bible have to non-Semitic languages like Egyptian, Hittite, or Hurrian.

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